

Village Sermons ;

OR,

TWELVE PLAIN AND SHORT

DISCOURSES

ON THE

Principal Doctrines of the Gospel ;

INTENDED FOR THE USE OF

FAMILIES, SUNDAY-SCHOOLS,

OR

COMPANIES

ASSEMBLED FOR RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

IN

Country Villages.

VOLUME II.

By GEORGE BURDER.

Come, let us go forth into the field : let us lodge in the Villages.
Sol. Song.

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DISSEMENT.

THE rapid reception of the former Volume excites a hope in the Author's breast, that his labours have not been in vain in the Lord. He takes this opportunity of expressing his thankfulness to God, and his obligations to the candour of the public. It gives him sensible pleasure to think that so many serious Christians are employed, from day to day, in the instruction of their neighbours, by reading these and other Sermons to them; and he hopes that private individuals and families may reap spiritual advantage from perusing them. The favorable reception of the former Volume, together with the request of several respected friends, and the hope of further usefulness, have induced him to publish twelve more Discourses. They are all upon very important subjects; the first is addressed to Children, and the last is intended as a check to Infidelity. They are a little longer than the former Sermons, several persons having complained that they were too short. May a gracious God vouchsafe his blessing!

A New Heart, the Child's best Portion.

S E R M O N

TO

C H I L D R E N.

EZEKIEL xxxvi. 26.

A new Heart will I give you.

MY dear children, I hope you will mind what I am going to say to you. I am going to read you a sermon made on purpose for children; and made so plain, that I hope you will understand it all. I suppose you know that you have *souls* which must live when you die, and must go to heaven or hell for ever. Now do you not think it is right to mind your souls, so that they may not go to hell? I know that you love to play, and it is right you should play sometimes; but you should mind something else besides play. You know there is a God that lives in heaven, and it is he who gives you meat and drink, and clothes; it is he that keeps you from being sick, and from dying; and he does this, that you may have time to think of him, and pray to him. For I would have you know, that it is a terrible thing for God to be angry with you. It is a great deal worse than for your father or mother, or master, to be angry with you. Perhaps they may beat you when they are angry; but God Almighty can cast you into hell, to be burned in the fire for ever and ever. Perhaps you will say, I hope he wont do so to me. My dear children, I hope so too; and I read this to you, that you may know how to avoid that misery, and that you may learn the way to heaven.

N 2

Now

Serm XII

4 A NEW HEART, THE CHILD'S BEST PORTION.

Now Jesus Christ is the way to heaven. He came down from heaven to save us from going to hell; and he did this by suffering and dying for our sins, that we might not suffer for them ourselves; just as if one of you was going to be beat, and punished for doing wrong, and another person should, in love to you, and to keep you from being hurt, be beat in your stead, and so you escape the punishment. The first thing that must be known in order to your being saved, is this, that you are sinners; that you have "left undone what you ought to have done, and that you have done the things you ought not to have done." When your parents have been angry with you for doing wrong, you have, perhaps, thought of it afterwards, and have been very sorry for it; and when you feel sorry for it, you want them to forgive you, and you go to them and ask their pardon. You also promise to do so no more. Now there is something in religion like this. We have all done what we should not do, and God may justly be angry with us; but "there is forgiveness with him that he may be feared." His dear son Jesus Christ bore his anger for us; and he sends his servants with the gospel, that is good news; telling us, that if we come to him by Jesus Christ he will forgive us, and be kind to us, and help us to do better for time to come. Now the text I have read, is God's kind promise to his children. *A new heart will I give you.* The word *heart* does not signify a part of your bodies, but it means the mind, the spirit, the disposition; that God will make it new, and right, and good; so that you should love, and serve, and enjoy him, both here and hereafter. It is the same thing that is in another place called being *born again*. You may remember reading, in the third chapter of St. John, that an aged man, named Nicodemus, came to Jesus Christ by night, to be taught

taught by him; and that our Saviour said to him, *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.* By this he meant a change of heart, which is made by the power and grace of the spirit of God. Now if the heart was not bad, there would be no need to change it; but the heart of every person, of every child, is very bad, till grace alters it. We are all born in sin, and love sin, until we are born again; and then we love Christ, and every thing that is good. And you will observe, that being baptized, or christened, is not the same as being born again. Water cannot cleanse or change the heart; it is “an outward visible sign of grace,” but not grace itself. The nature of this gracious change, I shall now explain to you, by describing both *the old heart* which God takes away, and *the new heart* which God gives.

1. The heart is by nature *hard*; it is compared in the words after the text to a *stone*, that feels nothing: the heart of man by nature has no feeling; that is, no feeling of spiritual things. A person who has no grace may be tender hearted to his fellow creatures, and “weep with them that weep;” but yet not mind what God says to him in the bible. The bible says we are all lost and ruined sinners; that the wrath of God abideth on us if we believe not; that God is angry with the wicked, and will turn them into hell. But how few people regard this. They eat and drink and take their pleasure, even on the Lord’s day, as if nothing was the matter. Now is not this owing to the hardness of their hearts? If you were to see a poor wretch at the bar condemned to die by the judge, and he was to remain unmoved, or even laugh in his face, you would think he had a very hard heart. Now this is the case of every sinner. My dear children, is it not *your* case? You are “by nature children of wrath, even as others;” but when

was you concerned about it? You could cry and be very sorry if your parents were angry with you, and threatened to turn you out of doors, and never see you any more; but how much worse would it be if God should say to you, "Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting burnings?"

The hardness of the heart appears also in not being moved and melted with the goodness of God. O how good is God to us all! He makes the sun to shine, and the flowers to spring, and the corn and herbs to grow. It is he who gives us food by day, and rest by night; and "his goodness should lead us to repentance." "He has also so loved the world," wicked as it is, "that he sent his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And he has sent his ministers to us with the glad tidings of this salvation, and they warn us to flee from the wrath to come; they invite and beseech us to be reconciled to God. But how hard is the heart that remains unmoved with all this tender love and goodness. What should you think of a child who treated a dear father or a kind mother with neglect and scorn, after they had spoken and behaved in the kindest manner to him? Would you not think him very brutish and wicked? Well, thus sinners treat the blessed God. And have not *you* done so? It is God who has led and fed you all your days. He gave you kind parents and friends to care for you when infants, or you must have been starved to death, and perished for want. He gives you clothes, and food, and health, and pleasure, and friends; and he does more, he gives you his gospel, he sends you the word of salvation, he gives you opportunity to learn to read it, and hear it; and what return have you made for all this goodness? O that your hearts may melt in godly sorrow for sin! May the Lord give you "the heart of flesh," the soft heart, the

the feeling heart, which "trembles at his word," and "fears the Lord and his goodness." Then will you be afraid of the least sin; you will avoid all bad company; you will not dare to take the name of the Lord in vain; you will not play on the Sabbath day; nor will you behave badly to your parents, or any other persons. And if you have this soft heart, you will be very sorry for your sins, and sorry to think you have offended God, and sorry to think that the blessed Jesus should suffer such shocking pains as he did for your sins.

II. The heart is by nature *proud*; but the new heart is *humble*. Man, as a *creature*, has no cause to be proud, much less as a *sinner*, yet we are all born proud. There never was a person born without a proud heart; though some do not shew it so much as others. You that are children know how apt you are to be proud of new clothes, and fine things; and how fond you are of shewing them to others; and as people grow up they grow prouder; proud of beauty, riches, learning, or office: yea, proud of being religious. So you read of the Pharisee, who went up to the temple to pray, and with monstrous pride stood by himself and said, "God I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, nor even as this Publican;" and then he boasted of his good works. But God abhorred this proud wretch; while he looked with compassion on the man whom the Pharisee despised, the poor Publican, whose heart was broken for sin, and who had nothing to say for himself, but "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Even children are proud of their religion; they will boast of being better than their brothers and sisters; they love to tell of *their* faults, and of their own goodness. My dear children, why do you hope to go to heaven? Is it because you are not so bad as others; because you say your prayers, and go to church or meeting? If so, you are proud; proud of your own righteousness,

ness, which the Scripture calls "filthy rags." Now who would be proud of filthy rags? But the righteousness of Christ is like a fine clean white robe, is not that better? And would you not be glad to have it? Pray then to God to clothe you with it.

The new heart is a *bumble heart*. The person who has it thinks so highly of the great and blessed God, the majesty of heaven and earth, that he shrinks, as it were, into nothing before him. He has such a view of the holiness of God, and his commandments; and such a sense of the wickedness and deceitfulness of his own heart, that he lies as it were in the dust; "abhors himself, and repents in dust and ashes."

III. The heart is by nature *worldly*. All natural men are called in scripture—*Men of the world, whose portion is in this life*: they think only of the world, they speak only of the world, and all their desires are worldly. "What shall we eat, what shall we drink, and how shall we be clothed?" After all these, and only such things as these, do worldly men seek. In this case there is no heart for religion. "God is not in all their thoughts;" and for the sake of the world, they neglect the gospel, and lose their own souls. They are "careful about many things with Martha, but do not chuse 'the one thing needful'" with Mary. Now this is a sad state to be in! If we love the world, the love of God is not in us, 1 John, ii. 15. If we "mind earthly things," so as to make them our chief good, our "end will be destruction," Phil. iii. 19. And say now, my dear children, are not your hearts worldly? Though you are not engaged in worldly business, yet your little hearts love only the things of this world. Are not play and pleasure all you seek and delight in? Perhaps you do not like prayer; either you do not pray at all in secret, or satisfy yourselves with a few formal words which you have
got

got by heart, without feeling any desires after Christ, and grace, and salvation. And when your parents pray in their families, as I hope they do, you do not regard what is said; and when you are in the house of God, perhaps you do not mind what the minister says, or content yourself merely with remembering the text. But this is not religion. The worldly heart must be taken away, and you must have a heavenly, spiritual heart, that delights in God and Christ, and prayer, and praise; in the word of God, and spiritual conversation. Blessed be God, there have been many such children; perhaps you have read of them in 'Janeway's Token for Children.' The Lord make you like them; that so you may live to God, if you are spared to live longer, or made fit for heaven, if he should be pleased to remove you.

IV. The heart by nature is *wicked*; the Scripture says it is *desperately* wicked, Jer. xvii. 9. And our Saviour says, Matt. xv. 19. *Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, thefts, murders, and many other bad things.* Now you know they must be in the heart, or they could not come out of it. Some people will tell you they have *good hearts*, even though they speak bad words, and do bad actions. But this is a mistake. A good tree bears good fruit; and a sweet spring does not send forth bitter waters. Now every person's heart is wicked by nature; and if some people do not commit such wicked actions as others, it is not because their hearts are better by nature, but because God would not let them be so wicked as they would; just as they chain up wild beasts to keep them from destroying us. My dear children, you may see the truth of this in yourselves. You know how apt you are, or were once to tell lies. Nobody told you how to tell lies. You did it naturally. Now is not that a proof of a wicked heart. Lying is a great sin. It is a work of the devil, who is "a liar, and the father of lies."

Lying

TO A NEW HEART, THE CHILD'S BEST PORTION.

Lying is so hateful to God, that he will not let any liars go to heaven; "nothing that maketh a lie," Rev. xxi. but he says, verse 8, "All liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." O pray to God to forgive you this great sin. You may know that you hearts are wicked by your going into a passion when you are crossed; and great anger is a degree of murder in God's esteem, Matt. v. 22. But the wickedness of the heart appears most of all in its enmity against God; for St. Paul says, Rom. viii. 7. "the carnal mind is enmity against God;" and have not you shown this in your dislike of religion, in breaking the Sabbath, in taking the Lord's name in vain, in disobeying your parents, and in many other ways? See then how needful it is that you should have a new heart; and the new heart is *a pure heart*. Jesus Christ says, Matt. v. 8. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Now the heart is "purified by faith." When we see what a wicked heart we have, and are filled with grief and fear, then we fly for refuge to Jesus Christ. Then God pardons our past sins for his sake, and gives us his Holy Spirit to make us hate sin, and fight against it; to make us desire to know his will, and love to do it. Pray then with David, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me," Psalm li. 10. Remember, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

V. The heart by nature is *deceitful*; yea, the scripture says, *deceitful above all things*. It calls good evil, and evil good. It cheats people with false pretences and vain excuses; so that the way of the wicked seems right to them, although it leads to destruction. There is scarcely any sinner, however great, that does not flatter himself all will be well at last, though God tells him the contrary. On this account, "he that trusteth his own heart is a fool."

But

But when the Lord gives a new heart, he makes it *sincere*. A real Christian is like Nathaniel, of whom our Saviour said, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile;" that is, no allowed hypocrisy in his dealings with God or man.

VI. and lastly, The heart is naturally an *unbelieving* heart. It is a sad thing that man should be more ready to believe the father of lies than the God of truth. It was by hearkening to the devil that Eve, our first mother, sinned; and there has been in mankind ever since "an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." It is plain that people do not believe God. If they believed what he says of sin, they would not dare to practise it. If they believed what he says of Christ, surely they would come to him for life and salvation. And the reason they do not is, they "love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." But the new heart is a *believing* heart. The Christian takes God at his word. He believes his threatenings and fears. He believes his promises in Christ, and hopes. He believes his commandments, and obeys. Without this faith, "it is impossible to please God;" for he that believeth not God hath made him a liar. But faith glorifies God. "He that believeth on Christ hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him, John iii. 36.

APPLICATION.

And now, dear children, I have told you what sort of hearts we have by nature, and what the Lord can make them by his grace, I hope you will consider what I have said, and consider what hearts you have. Are they not *hard*, and *proud*, and *worldly*, and *wicked*, and *deceitful*, and *unbelieving*? I think you must own they are so by nature. And does not this shew you that

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that you must be *born again*, and have a *new heart*? If your heart should not be changed, you will grow more wicked as you grow older; and if you should die in your *sin*, you will be lost for ever.

But, *my dear children*, I hope better things. Do not you know that Jesus Christ came "to seek, and to save that which was lost?" And do not you remember reading that some good people brought their little children to him, and desired him to bless them? And he said, *Suffer little children to come unto me*. Would you not be very glad if he was here now, and you could go and kneel down to him, and say, Blessed Jesus, bless me, even me also. Well, though he is in heaven, you may do this now. He is the same to-day that he was then. He loves little children as well as ever. And I beg and beseech each of you, when you go home, to go into some private place, and kneel down, and say, Blessed Jesus, I have a wicked heart, that makes me do wicked things, and I am afraid of thy anger: but I have heard in the gospel that thou hast died for sinners, to save them from hell, and sin, and the world; O save me, lest I perish. Take away my heart of stone, and give me a heart of flesh; a heart to know, trust, and love thee, that I may serve thee in this world, and be for ever happy in the world to come.

6 JUL 62

Let none of you say, "I am not old enough, or not big enough to be religious; it is time enough yet." Dear children, you are not too young to die. Younger than you are in the grave. Besides, you cannot be too young to serve the Lord. Can you be *safe* too soon? Can you be happy too soon? Can you glorify God too much? Surely not. Well then, pray for a new heart. It is the best gift that God can give you, or you receive; and may God Almighty, for Christ's sake, bestow it upon every one of you. Amen!

The Lord's Prayer.



S E R M O N,

ON

MATTHEW vi. 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13th verses.

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

PRAYERS to God is the bounden duty of all men. "We live, and move, and have our being in him." "Every good and perfect gift proceeds from him." "Men ought therefore always to pray, and not to faint." We are so sinful, that we always need mercy. We are so weak, that we always need help. We are so empty, that we always need supplies. We are so exposed, that we always need protection. How reasonable then that we should continue in prayer.

But we greatly need direction in prayer. We know not how to pray, nor what to pray for, as we ought.

ought. Therefore Christ has been pleased to teach us in these words, which contain an excellent pattern for prayer. Not that we are tied down to use these very words, much less to use them always; but *after this manner* we are to pray. Now as many persons constantly use this prayer, it may be very useful to explain it; because it may be feared that a great many say the words without knowing their meaning, which is formality at best; and many contradict every part of this prayer by their wicked lives, which is base hypocrisy. May we therefore be assisted by the good Spirit rightly to understand it, that so, whenever we use it hereafter, we may offer up a reasonable and spiritual sacrifice, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

1. *Our Father, who art in heaven.* We should always begin our prayers with proper thoughts of God. And what thoughts of him are so proper as those suggested by these words, namely, his *goodness* and his *greatness*? As a *father*, he is good. As a *heavenly* father, he is great. Thus are we taught to approach him with confidence and reverence.

As the creator of all men, God may, in a general sense, be called the father of all; but it is in a higher and sweeter sense that he is here called a father. We are to take it in a gospel view—God reconciled to believing sinners through faith in the blood of Jesus Christ. God is angry with the wicked every day. He does not look down upon them with a father's eye, nor do they look up to him with a child-like spirit. Therefore this prayer is not fit for the use of a man who lives in sin, and whose carnal mind is enmity against God. How dare the sweater, the liar, the drunkard, call God a father? God will not own the relation. If such men pray, might they not rather cry—Our father which

which art *in hell*? for Christ said to such persons, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." John viii. 44.

But when a person is convinced of his lost estate by sin; when he is enlightened to know Christ as a saviour; and when, by precious faith, he comes to God through him; then God is reconciled to him; his anger is turned away, and he comforts him. Then he may look up to God as "a merciful God, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin;" for "to as many as receive Christ, and the atonement through him, he giveth power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name;" and to such only is "the spirit of adoption" given, whereby they cry "Abba, father." For it is one thing to use the word *father*, and another to approach him, as a loving child comes to a tender parent, with a persuasion of his being able and willing to supply his wants. To such persons this name is full of comfort; for they are emboldened to believe, that if earthly parents, though evil, know how to give good gifts to their children, God our heavenly father is much more disposed to do them good, and bless them with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus.

But this name teaches us also the *greatness* of God. Children ought to treat their earthly parents with great respect; but what reverence is due to the father of spirits, whose throne is in the heavens! yea, "the heaven of heavens cannot contain him." God is every where present; he is not confined to heaven; but he is said to dwell there, because there he displays the brightest beams of his glorious majesty; and there angels and saints bow low before his feet, crying day and night "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty!" Such thoughts as

these
O 2

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

out of Satan's kingdom of sin and darkness into the holy and happy kingdom of God's dear son.

Now when we say *thy kingdom come*, we pray that the light, power, liberty, and glory of Christ's spiritual kingdom may be more fully experienced in our own hearts, more fully established in our own souls. For, as one observes—"In *worship* we pay our homage to God. In the *word*, we come to learn his laws. In the *sacraments*, we renew our oaths of allegiance. In *alms-giving*, we pay him tribute. In *prayer*, we ask his leave; and *praise* is our rent to the great Lord, from whom we hold our all."

Thus also we express our souls desire for our poor fellow sinners. Deeply affected with the state of heathens, Jews, Mahometans, and wicked Christians, we pour forth our souls in holy longings for their conversion, earnestly desiring the joyful day when it shall be said—"The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever." Rev. xi. 15.

4. *Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.* God, the glorious maker of the world, has a right to govern it. His will is the proper rule of his creatures' actions; and it is obeyed by them all, except men and devils. God has made known his will to us in his word. The law of the ten commandments shews what obedience he requires of us; but, as fallen creatures, we have rendered ourselves incapable of perfect obedience to it, and so of obtaining life by it. God has graciously given us the law of faith, or the gospel of salvation, by Jesus Christ; "and this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his son Jesus Christ, and love one another." But the natural man refuses obedience to this also; he is either uncon-

cerned about salvation, or dislikes the way of it; and while he remains in this state, he cannot do the will of God in any respect acceptably. "for without faith it is impossible to please him." In short, "the carnal mind is enmity against God;" the will of the flesh is directly contrary to the will of God; but it accords with the will of Satan, sinners being "led captive by him at his will."

How necessary then is this petition—*thy will be done!* And it includes, 1. *A desire to know it*; as the Psalmist prays, (143. 10.) "Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God;" or, as converted Saul, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" 2. *A heart to do it*; a heart on which God has written his laws. I remember a person who told me when he was teaching his child to say this prayer, and came to this petition—"thy will be done," the child refused to say it, and would have it, "my will be done." This poor simple child was far more honest, than many of us, who say *thy will be done*, and yet determine to follow our own will: but the real christian's desire is—"O that there were such an heart in me, to fear God, and to keep all his commandments always!" Deut. v. 29. We pray also, 3. *For strength to do the will of God*; for "*to will* may be present, and yet how to perform that which is good we may not find;" but, knowing that the Lord worketh in his people both *to will* and *to do*, we hereby pray that he would "make us perfect in every good work, to do his will; working in us that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ. This petition also includes holy submission to the will of his providence, however afflictive, and that we may learn to bear it without murmuring, knowing that it is his will, and for our good."

Now, we pray for grace to do all this, in imitation

tion of the spirits of just men made perfect, and of the finless angels in heaven. God's will is done *in heaven*. The angels that excel in strength do his commandment, hearkening to the voice of his word; they do it humbly, cheerfully, diligently, constantly; and so do glorified saints in heaven, "for there his servants shall serve him." So let it be our meat and drink to do the will of our heavenly father, and to bear Christ's yoke which is easy, and his burden which is light.

5. *Give us this day our daily bread.* This petition implies our dependence on God for food, and all the supports and comforts of life. Man, as a fallen creature, has forfeited the good things of this life, and deserves to be deprived of them all. The earth was cursed for man's sake; therefore in sorrow and labour he eats of it; but it is through the goodness of God that he has power to labour; that rain from heaven and fruitful seasons are ever granted. It is "he who gives us our corn, and wine, and oil;" and, though the poor man works hard for his daily bread, it is no less the gift of God. To him also we owe the appetite that makes our food pleasant, and the power of digestion that makes it nourishing.

Moderation in our desires is here expressed. We are not taught to ask for riches and honours; they are often the destructive snares of those who possess them; but we may lawfully ask for food and raiment, "for our heavenly Father knoweth that we have need of all these things;" ver. 32. and having these, we ought to be content.

We are not to ask for *weekly bread*, or *monthly bread*, or *yearly bread*; but for *daily bread*; for we must not boast of to-morrow, or depend on future years; but live in daily dependence on God, without anxious cares for a future time. Sufficient to

the day is the evil thereof; and sufficient for the day is the good thereof; so that we are to exercise ourselves in daily prayer and receive every meal, and every morsel, as the gift of a good God, which will make it sweeter.

The christian will also ask for bread for his soul as well as his body. Christ is to a believer's soul what food is to the body. He is "the bread of life," and if we are born of God, we shall daily desire to feed upon him in our hearts, by faith, with thanksgiving.

6. *And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.* This petition is joined to the last by the word *and*, which may teach us that without the forgiveness of sins, the comforts of this life can do us no real good; "for what is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Every man is a sinner. There is not a creature who wants daily bread, that does not also want daily pardon; and yet how few are as sensible of it! Sin is here compared to a debt. There is a debt of *duty* we owe to God; and, in case of failure, we contract a new debt to the justice of God. The debts we owe to man expose us to misery here; but the debts we owe to God expose us to eternal misery; for "the wages of sin is death." And be it remembered, we are not able to pay a single farthing of this debt: if ever we are delivered from going to the prison of hell, it must be by a free pardon, for so we here pray—"*forgive us our debts; or, as it is elsewhere, 'forgive us our trespasses.'*" God will take no composition. We can make no amends. It is not taking care not to contract a new debt that will discharge an old one; this will not do with our neighbours, nor will it do with God. Free forgiveness alone will prevent our punishment. But be it carefully observed, that though a sinner is justified freely, it is only

only "through the redemption that is in Christ." It costs us nothing; but it cost him dear. And it is only through faith in his blood that we can receive it. With believing and penitent hearts we must go to God by Jesus Christ, and plead for his mercy for Christ's sake. At the same time we are here taught what is the true disposition of a gracious soul—a forgiving temper—"as we forgive our debtors;" that is, as we forgive those who have injured us in our property, person, or name. Not that our kindness to another deserves forgiveness at the hand of God; but that, as we cannot expect pardon from God, while we refuse it to those who ask us for it; we may humbly hope that if we are enabled by grace to forgive others, God, whose thoughts and ways are infinitely above ours, will not reject our prayer for pardoning mercy through Jesus Christ.

7. *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.* Those whose sins are forgiven, will be afraid of sinning again; and, knowing the power of temptation, will pray to be kept from it. Now *temptation* is any thing which makes *trial* of us, and proves what is in our heart. Afflictions are God's trials of us, for our good; but all *Satan's* temptations are to lead us into evil. The person, who uses this prayer aright, is afraid of sin; knows the plague of his own heart; the power of his corruptions; the snares of the world, and the devices of the devil; and he offers up this petition to God, that he would keep him out of the way of such trials as would be too hard for him; or grant sufficient strength to resist and overcome the devil; "*the evil one*;" "*the wicked one*;" the great tempter, "*who goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour*." But this prayer must be accompanied with *watching*, and avoiding all wilful occasions of sin, or else words do but mock God.

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8. The conclusion of the prayer is—*For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.* This shews us why we should pray to God; and why we may hope to be heard. The *kingdom* is his. God is king of all the world, and has a right to dispose of all things in it. The *power* is his, as well as the authority: whatever our wants are, he can supply them; whatever our enemies are, he can subdue them. He therefore *can* answer our prayers; and, as a loving father, we hope he *will*. His then will be the *glory*. Whatever God does is for his own glory; and if we are disposed to give him all the glory of what he does for us, we may hope that our petitions will be granted. This kingdom, this power, this glory, are *for ever*; he will never want the power to help; and if we are saved, we shall never cease to give him praise.

The force of the whole prayer lies in the *first* and *last* words of it—*Our father, and Amen.* In the *first*, we apply to God in Christ, as reconciled to us; in the *last*, we set our seal to the whole, and say *Amen*; so let it be; so, we humbly hope, it shall be, for Christ's sake.

APPLICATION.

How awfully is this prayer abused! Ignorant people use it as a kind of charm; and think it enough to say the words, without considering the meaning. O beware, as you love your souls, of mocking God by thoughtless praying. Can you call *him* a father, while you obey the devil? Will you say, "hallowed be thy name," and yet profane it daily? What do you care for *his* kingdom, while you belong to another; or talk of God's will, without wishing to do it? Do you not forget him when you eat and drink? Are you not careless about the forgiveness of

of your sins, adding daily to the dreadful debt; and perhaps living in malice and wrath? How can you pray that God will not lead you into temptation, when you run wilfully into the way of it; frequenting the ale-house, the playhouse, the fair, the wakes, and the company of the lewd, the profane, and the drunken? Dear fellow-creature, permit me to say, that thus contradicting your prayers by your life, you cannot expect to be heard: nay, God may justly say to you at last, "Out of thine own mouth will I condemn thee, thou wicked servant." But God forbid! Think over this prayer before you use it again; and beg of God to enable you to use it with understanding and sincerity, that the rich blessings asked for in it may be your's, and God be glorified in your everlasting salvation.

Those who are "born of God," and have "the spirit of grace and supplication," teaching them to pray, will not confine themselves at all times to these words; yet may they be used with great comfort and edification. God is your *father*; he is more disposed to give, than you are to ask; plead that dear relation. Let his glory be your first desire; the increase of his kingdom your highest wish. Let his will be done in love, by saints below as well as those above; then fear not to depend on his providence for daily supplies. "There is forgiveness with him that he may be feared," and he that is for us, is greater than he who is against us. Though surrounded with snares, his sheep are in his hand; and they shall be kept by his power, through faith, unto salvation. Then shall prayer be turned into praise; and all the ransomed of the Lord shall unite in full chorus, and say,—*"Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever, and ever. Amen, and Amen."* 6 10 62

THE DANGER OF FORMALITY, &c.
2
The Danger of Formality and
Hypocrisy.



S E R M O N,

MATTHEW vii, 21.

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doth the Will of my Father, which is in Heaven.

WE have before us an eternal world, in which there are but two states, the one inexpressibly happy, the other inconceivably wretched; and in one of these each of us must very soon be fixed.— But in which?—Is it possible we can be indifferent about knowing in which, when an hour, a moment, may place us in one of them? Perhaps you will say, How can a person know? I answer, it may be known; clearly known by the word of God: for in the scriptures the characters of saints and sinners are exactly drawn. It is plainly laid down who shall go to heaven, and who shall go to hell; and having this rule, we are often exhorted to try ourselves by it; “to examine ourselves whether we be in the faith;” and thus “to make our calling and election sure.” The words of our text are of this nature; and you will remember that they are the words of Jesus Christ, who is to be our judge; so that the same lips, which declared this to us, will
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pronounce upon each of us the sentence of life or death. O that we may now learn, what all the world shall then learn, that true religion does not consist in words, or professions of regard to Christ, or in gifts, or zeal, or usefulness; but in doing the will of God from the heart.

I. We learn from these words, that *at the great day* there will be an earnest desire in many to enter into the kingdom of heaven. By "the kingdom of heaven" is sometimes intended the kingdom of grace in the church of Christ on earth; but here it means the state of glory above, where Jesus shall reign in all his divine glory, and all his subjects enjoy perfect bliss. That this is referred to, appears from the next verse—"Many will say unto me *in that day* Lord, Lord." In *that day*; it is not said in *what* day: nor was there any need to say what day; for all the disciples of Christ know what is meant by it. They are often thinking on that day when they shall "see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great glory;" "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with all his mighty angels in flaming fire." This is called *the great day*; a day of the greatest grandeur, a day of the greatest joy, and a day of the greatest terror. It is also called *the day of the Lord*, and *the day of Christ*. This is *man's* day; yea, the *devil's* day; when sinners triumph, and Satan reigns; but the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the prince of this world shall be judged.

O how careless are most people now about this great day. Scoffers abound in these latter times, and say "Where is the promise of his coming?" Now and then, indeed, a just concern has prevailed for a season; as under John's ministry, "the kingdom of heaven suffered violence, and all men were for pressing into it." When a nation has been frightened by

an earthquake or a plague, multitudes have been alarmed for a while. A few years ago thousands followed Mr. Whitfield into the open fields to hear the word; and we have read of great awakenings in America and other places. O that we could now see the same! O that now, when the judgments of the Lord are abroad in the earth, this sinful nation would learn righteousness!

But O how will it be when the day comes? How will it be when the trumpet shall sound? What terror will seize the heart of the wicked man! Ah, will he say, is the dreadful day come at last; the day I so often heard of; so often laughed at! O my folly! O my vain and hurtful lusts! For what have I lost my soul! for the sake of my business, my pleasures, my companions, I have lost my soul, my heaven, my all. O that I never had been born! But, perhaps, recovering himself a little, he may say—Am I not a Christian; was I not baptized, and confirmed, and did I not take the Sacrament? Lord, Lord, open to me! but it will be too late; the door is shut: many shall then seek to enter in, but shall not be able. The judge will *profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye workers of iniquity.* And this leads us to observe in the next place, that

II. *A mere profession of religion will then be found insufficient.* The judgment of men carries it now; but it is a small matter to be judged of man's judgment. Man looks only at the outward appearance, but the Lord searcheth the heart; and he will then make the result of his search public. The young man may now rejoice in his useful lusts and pleasures; he may walk in the ways of his heart, and in the sight of his eyes; but let him know—and O that he may consider it, that—for all these things, God will bring him into judgment. Eccles. xi. 9. Yea,

SERMON XX.
THE DANGER OF FORMALITY, &c.

Kind will bring every *secret thing* into judgment; what is spoken in the ear in the closet shall be proclaimed on the house-top; and then shall the secrets of all hearts be made manifest. Then shall many that were first be last; and many that were last shall be first. Then shall the hypocrites be detected and exposed. Then shall a separation be made between the tares and the wheat; between the sheep and the goats; between the foolish and the wise virgins. Then shall he say to poor vain formalists, *I never knew you, &c.* But let us more particularly examine the pretensions of these people.

It should seem that they used to pray; they used to say, Lord, Lord! It is certainly a bad sign for any one that he does not pray; and it is generally a good sign when a person does pray; but it is not a certain sign of grace. "The wicked sometimes pour out a prayer when God's chastening is upon them." Afflictions will sometimes extort prayers and vows, and many duties of religion; but when the affliction is over, there is an end of their devotion; and they return to their sins, as the dog to his vomit. So there may be transient convictions of sin, and terrific fears of hell, especially in the time of sickness and apprehension of death; and these may lead not only to a temporary reformation, but to doing many things, as Herod did when he heard John gladly, and as numbers of persons in popish countries who do penance for their sins; but there may be all this and much more while men remain workers of iniquity.

Again, these people appeared to be zealous in religion, as the repetition of the word *Lord, Lord*, seems to intimate. And we find in the next verse, that they *are* prophesied in the name of Christ. Most of the prophets, especially the *stated* prophets, were

"holy men;" but some, especially of the occasional ones, as Balaam, Saul, and Caiphas, were wicked men. So were *some* of the first preachers of Christianity; and so are *many* now. This is an awful word for the carnal clergy of any church, and wicked preachers of any denomination! and it shews that zeal for religion is no proof of sincerity in it.

These men did more still:—"they cast out devils in Christ's name. When Christ was upon earth, and for some ages after, the devil was permitted to possess the bodies of men; but Christ and his apostles were able to cast them out; and so did common Christians for a long time after, by the mention of his name! But this and other extraordinary gifts were not confined to real Christians; wicked professors sometimes did it, and here we see, boasted of it, and pleaded it; but the plea is not admitted. Other "wonderful works" they also did; for so the Lord permitted, in order to promote the spread of Christianity: but what availed all this, while the devil was not cast out of their own hearts, and the wonderful works of God's grace had never been wrought in their own souls. Men may be famous and useful in the church, yet after all be cast away."

These people also professed obedience to Christ; they called him Lord. He is "Lord of all." He has all power in heaven and earth; and to him every knee shall bow. But it is to no purpose to call him Master and Lord, if we do not the things which he commands. Christ is not deceived by compliments, and he will reject that false devotion which consists only in words. "Saying and doing are two things, often parted in the conversation of men. He that said, *I go, Sir*, never stirred a step." Matt. xxiii. 30.

Now, notwithstanding all the professions of these people, it appears, from the words of Christ himself,

that they were *workers of iniquity*. They loved sin, they lived in sin, they made a trade of sin; it was their calling and business, at which they daily worked, as a man at his proper trade. All this they did under the mask of religion, and are therefore rejected. *Depart from me; I never knew you.* Observe here, my friends, the deceitfulness of sin, and the deceitfulness of the heart. Though these formal professors lived in sin, and must know they did so, yet they continued to depend on their outward forms, and to approach the bar of God with a lie in their right hands. Alas! how many deceivers live and die deceived, and their fatal mistake is never detected till it is past remedy! Just like the Jews of old, to whom St. Paul thus speaks, Rom. ii. 17. Behold thou art called a Jew, and reatest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, and knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; and art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes; which hast the form of knowledge, and of the truth in the law. These outward things the Jews rested in, presumed upon, and were proud of; while they were ignorant of the spiritual design of their own rites; and many of them so wicked, that "the name of God was blasphemed among the Gentiles" by their sins. They were strangers to that important distinction which the apostle makes, ver. 28, 29, of that chapter, where he says, "He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God." Thus, you see, there is a great difference between outward and inward religion; between the religion

his will; and there are two principal things in the scriptures, namely, what we are to *believe* concerning God, and the *duty* which he requires of us; or, in other words, *Faith* and *Practice*; and both these are equally necessary, for we can never do the will of God in holy obedience without first believing in God through Jesus Christ. The whole of Christian religion consisting in this, *faith, which worketh by love.*

Faith is first necessary in order to obedience; so Christ taught the people, who asked him, *What must we do that we may work the works of God?* John vi. 28, &c. *This is the work of God,* said he, *that ye believe on him whom he hath sent;* as if he had said, "The great and important duty which I am come to point out to you, and which leads the way to all others, and is necessary to the acceptance of your persons, and of all your obedience, and which therefore God commands, approves, and is the author of, is this, that ye cordially embrace, and yield yourselves up to faith by me, as the true Messiah, the only Mediator, according to the discoveries I make of myself, and of the way of salvation by me." And St. John also says, 1 John iii. 23. *This is his commandment: That we should believe on the name of his son Jesus Christ.* When people read or hear of the commandments, they think the ten commandments only are meant, but this is a great mistake; for the very first business of a poor guilty helpless sinner is to come to Christ for salvation. We are not to suppose that we must first prepare, or make ourselves worthy, by sorrow for sin, purifying our hearts, or reforming our lives, before we may venture to trust in Christ; all these are the proper fruits and effects of faith. We must believe in him "*who justifieth the UNGODLY,*" and not think first to make ourselves godly, and then hope in him. Faith is the first work,

work. Look to Jesus. Come to Jesus. Trust in Jesus; and then a good hope of pardoning mercy will incline the heart to love him, and hate every evil way. We cannot do good works till we are in Christ by faith, any more than the branch of a tree can produce fruit when separate from the stock. Christ is the vine, and we are the branches; and by virtue of union to him we become fruitful in every good word and work.

This also is the will of God, even our sanctification. God is holy; therefore must we be holy. We are chosen in Christ unto sanctification and obedience. The Lord gives his people a new heart, upon which he writes his laws, and which, through his grace, become pleasant to them. Being crucified with Christ, the old man of sin is crucified. They reckon themselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. The daily enquiry of a new born soul is, "Lord what wilt thou have me to do." "Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God." "I will run in the way of thy commandments, when thou hast enlarged my heart." And this disposition will shew itself in all the relations and circumstances of life; in the family, the workshop, and in all common actions, as well as in the house of God. Whether we are husbands, wives, children, servants, subjects, filling up our places to God's glory, will be our constant aim. Particularly shall we be desirous to fulfil the royal law of love to our brethren, on which great stress is laid in the New Testament; for the law, as far as it relates to our neighbour, is fulfilled in one word, *Love*.

Now persons of this character shall have an abundant entrance into the kingdom and glory of Jesus Christ. While formalists and hypocrites are shut out, the blessed Redeemer will smile upon thee,
and

and say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;" and he will mention, as the evidence of their election and fruit of their faith, the acts of christian love which they performed to their hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, or imprisoned brethren, taking them as kindly as if they had been done to himself; "for inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me." See Matt. xxv. 34, &c.

APPLICATION.

And now, my friends, having heard how awful the fate of mere formalists and hypocrites will prove at the great day, it surely becomes us seriously to examine of what kind our religion is. It plainly appears from what has been said, "that the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power," 1 Cor. iv. 20. And as there are many who have the form of godliness but who deny the power of it, it is most necessary, as we value the salvation of our souls, to determine whether our religion is form or power, that so we may know whether the great Judge will own or disown us at the last. Consider therefore what your religion consists in, and what you depend upon. Is it that you were born and bred a Christian; that you were baptized; that you have gone to church or meeting; that you can say the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments; that you have taken the Sacrament, been sorry for your sins, and to do to others as you would be done by? Or that you have done your best, and put you trust in God? Are these your pleas? Is this your religion? Then, pardon me if I speak the truth in love, and tell you plainly this will not do. These empty boasts prove that you are a stranger to true heart religion. All these things you may imagine you have done; but

but if this be all, it is only crying, Lord, Lord. Had you gone much further than this, and equalled the Pharisees in their zeal and devotion, all would be insufficient; without a conviction of you sin and misery; a heart humbled for your iniquities; a view of the only way of salvation through Jesus Christ; and that faith in him which purifies the heart, works by love, and overcomes the world. Be not deceived then. Satisfy yourselves with nothing short of that which Christ will accept and approve at last. This is doing the will of God; which will, as you have now heard, requires in the first place believing in the Lord Jesus Christ; coming to him as a guilty helpless sinner, and receiving him as your wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Come then, my fellow sinner, to Jesus. Beg of him to teach you. Beg of him to wash you in his blood. Beg of him to give you his Spirit, and enable you from a principle of love to forsake every evil way, and cleave to him with purpose of heart. Then shall you know that "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink," forms and ceremonies, "but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

Let me drop a word of caution to those who perhaps may boast that they are no hypocrites, for they don't pretend to any religion. Can you think that this will be admitted as an excuse? Will you dare to approach the awful bar of God and plead, "Lord, I never pretended to serve thee? I never thought it worth my while to know or worship thee. I loved the world and my sins so well, that I lived like an Atheist." O, Sirs, deceive not yourselves. Answer that question if you can, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" Formalists and hypocrites pay some compliment to religion, by counterfeiting it, and imitating it; yet will they perish; but you despise it. You treat the

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blest God and the gracious Saviour as unworthy your notice. How then can you expect but to have your portion with hypocrites and unbelievers, and to be turned into hell with all those who forget God?

These words may probably be very alarming to the tender spirits of some who truly fear God. Some of the sincere and humble followers of the Lamb may be ready to fear lest he should be angry with them at last, and say, Depart, I never knew you. But, my dear brethren, tell me, is it not your heart's desire to know and to do the will of God, particularly in those two grand points, faith and holiness? Say, is not Jesus high in your esteem; the chief of ten thousand, and altogether lovely; and would you not gladly be conformed to him in cheerfully doing and patiently suffering the will of God? Take courage then. These words are as full of comfort for you as they are full of terror to formalists and hypocrites. The friend of sinners will say to his dear people, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, and for which my grace prepared your souls on earth. Enter into the joy of your Lord.

And now are any of you beginning to say, I fear I have been deceived. I fear my religion will not stand the test. I have mistaken the shadow for the substance; the shell for the kernel. What shall I do? I answer, it is an infinite mercy that you have discovered your mistake. You might have died deceived, and have been rejected by Christ. But it may be hoped that it is a token for good, and the dawn of mercy to your soul. Let your fears bring you to your knees, and at the throne of grace implore divine aid. Say with the Psalmist, Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

The Pharisee and Publican.

S E R M O N,

LUKE xviii. 13.

God be merciful to me a sinner!

THERE is a time approaching when **MERCY** will appear to all mankind the most valuable thing in the world. Figure to yourselves the awful hour, when you shall be about to quit this mortal state, and launch into an unknown world: realize the still more awful moment, when the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised; when the great white throne shall be erected, and the assembled world shall appear before the universal judge; when the grand separation shall be made between the righteous and wicked; the one being placed at the right hand, the other at the left of Christ—then, my friends, then will the full value of *mercy* be known. O, what a word will *mercy* be then; a word for *mercy* then! “Vessels of *mercy*,” obtainers of *mercy*—how will they shout and sing, “O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his *mercy* endureth for ever.” While others, in all the bitterness of fruitless woe, shall cry, O, that we had but known the need of *mercy*, the way of *mercy*, and the value of *mercy*, while it might have been had! But now the door is shut; the mercies of God are clean gone for ever, and he will be favourable no more.

SERM. xvi.

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With this amazing scene in prospect, let us address ourselves to the text, and to the parable of the Pharisee and Publican, of which it is a part. The introduction to it, and the conclusion of it, will be the best key to its true meaning. ver. 9. "Our Saviour spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others." Here are two bad things in their character. 1. *They trusted in themselves*—which no man can do if he knows the holy law of God; and, 2. *They despised others*, which we cannot do if we know our own hearts. The conclusion shews how God dislikes such people, while he accepts a poor dejected sinner; for "every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." ver. 14.

Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. ver. 10. The Pharisees were a sect of people in those days in high repute for religion; they separated themselves from others, as if more holy; they distinguished themselves by peculiar zeal for ceremonies; but many of them were rank hypocrites, neglecting the religion of the heart, and indulging themselves in cruelty and oppression. The Publican also appeared at the same place, at the same time, and on the same errand; but how different their characters! Had we seen them both together, we should perhaps have thought far better of the Pharisee than of the Publican; "for man looketh only at the outward appearance, but God looketh at the heart." Very different motives brought them there. The Pharisee came because it was a public place, and he wished to be seen and admired; the Publican came because it was "a house of prayer," and he wanted to pour forth his soul before God. Thus, my friends, in all our places of worship, there is a mixture

tare of characters; but let us remember God is the searcher of the heart, and he knows what brings us to his house.

Ver. 11. *The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself*—he stood by himself, with great formality, in a place where the people must notice him; he prayed thus with himself, and to himself, not to God: ah, Sirs, there are many people pray to themselves; they speak not to God; their words never reach him: they utter sounds, but not desires; this praying will do no good. It is remarkable that in all the Pharisee's prayer there is not one petition; he came to pray; but surely he forgot his errand, for he asks nothing: Praise to God is certainly a proper and a noble part of prayer; but though he pretends to praise, he only boasts. But let us hear his fine prayer; *God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are.* What is this but ignorance, pride, and censoriousness? Besides, he began his prayer with a lie. He was as other men are, for all men are sinners; in this respect all are on a level; there is no difference, as the scripture speaks, Rom. iii. 22, 23. It is true that some men are restrained from sins that others commit; but the seeds of every sin are by nature in the heart of every man; and if we have not actually committed them, we owe it to the restraining power or the changing grace of God. The Pharisee seems to admit of this by saying, *God, I thank thee*; but we have reason to doubt his sincerity in so saying; and to think they were words of course and form; for so proud a heart as his could not be duly sensible of his obligations to divine grace; and there are many who, like him, use words of praise, but feel no gratitude to God. His meaning was probably this, "O God, thou author of my being, I thank thee for the noble powers with which thou hast endowed me, by my own wife

and careful improvement of which I have kept myself from being so wicked as other people." *inborn*
 You will observe that there were two principal parts of the laws; the one respected morals, the other ceremonials. Now the Pharisee takes care to brag of his regard to both; and first, to the moral law, *I am not as other men are*—well, what are other men? Why, according to his account, it should seem that most other men are, *extortioners, unjust, adulterers*. At all times there are too many such people as these; but his way of mentioning them was merely for the purpose of exalting himself and his own sect, some of whom were equally criminal, though under the mask of religion. It may be the Pharisee was not an "extortioner"—did not cruelly oppress his neighbour, but we have Christ's authority for it that the Pharisees were generally "covetous," and some of them "devoured widows' houses." He says he was not "unjust"—not a knave or a cheat; but could he say he had never coveted his neighbour's goods, for this is heart-robbery in the sight of God. He says he was not an "adulterer," it may be so; but our Lord says, that "he, who looketh upon a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery already with her in his heart." Matt. v. But this was the folly of such men; they washed the outside of the cup and the plattery but *within* they were full of extortion and excess; righteous without, but full of hypocrisy and iniquity within; so Christ declares, Matt. xxiii. 26, &c.
 Not content with boasting of himself, he must abuse the poor publican—*I am not as this publican*. What business had he with the publican? He ought to have rejoiced to see him in the temple; he might have hoped it was a symptom of his reformation. He should have gone and shook hand with him, and given him some good advice. But his proud heart

heart spurns at the broken-hearted sinner; just as modern pharisees, who look upon mourning souls as poor canting, whining hypocrites, far beneath their notice. There was a great deal of cruelty in this; he could not say his own prayers without putting in a caveat, as it were, against the petition of his poor neighbour.

But the Pharisee has yet more to boast of. He had not only "done nobody any harm," as the vulgar phrase is, but he had been mighty religious; he kept *Lent all the year*. *I fast*, said he, *twice a week*. Occasional fasting, in order to humble ourselves before God for our sins, is very commendable, whether by private persons or public bodies; but the Pharisee's fasting was not for that purpose, but for ostentation, and with a view to merit at the hand of God, as appears by his boasting of it. Beside this, he tells God, *he gave tithes of all he possessed*; not only of what the law of Moses required, but of the herbs in his garden; he devoted a tenth part of all he had to religious uses, whether titheable or not by the law.

Thus you have the Pharisee's prayer; a prayer which God rejected; for though he justified himself, God did not justify him. And now, my friends, let us examine ourselves. Is there nothing of the Pharisee's spirit in us? Do we not hear people speaking the same language sometimes? Is not this all the hope of some persons, that they never did any person harm; that they pay every one his due; and perhaps that they go to church constantly; behave decently; take the sacrament; give alms, and so on? How often do we hear this language on a dying bed? Poor ignorant souls rush into the presence of God with no other foundation for their hope than the Pharisee had; while we hear not a word of true humility, poverty of spirit, sense of sin, or hope in

Jesus as the sinner's only friend and hope. O Sirs, beware of resembling the Pharisee. Pleas like his may please men, but they will not succeed with God: rather let us resemble the poor broken-hearted Publican, whose character and prayer we next consider.

Ver. 13. *And the Publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner!* By a publican you are not to understand the keeper of a public-house, but a tax-gatherer. The Jews were, at this time, subject to the Roman emperor, and paid him taxes, which were sometimes farmed by the rich publicans, who in the execution of their office were too often dishonest and oppressive; on account of which, and on account of the taxes themselves, which were vexatious to the Jews, the name of a publican was abominable, and was classed with those of harlots and sinners.

Whether this publican was an extortioner or not, we cannot say. Doubtless he was a sinner; and by some means or other he became a convinced sinner, a penitent sinner, and a praying sinner. Perhaps this was the first time that ever he prayed in his life, for sinning generally keeps men from praying. It is plain that the spirit of God had humbled his heart; he was one of those blessed men who are "poor in spirit," and he was one of those blessed mourners who shall be comforted."

Observe his posture—he stood afar off—at a great distance from the holy place, where the priests officiated; he knew this became him, for he had lived at a great distance from God as a sinner; and he knew he deserved that God should for ever behold him afar off.

Observe also his dejected looks, he could not look up; he thought it would be presumptuous in him to lift

lift up his eyes to heaven, the habitation of God's glory. Other sinners have thought the same; David says, Ps. xl. 12. "Innumerable evils have compassed me about, mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up;" but those downcast eyes attracted the eyes of God; he could not lift up his eyes, but he lifted up his heart; and there is no beauty in the sight of God greater than blushing for sin;" "for to this man will I look, saith the Lord, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." Isa. lxy. 2.

Another mark of his repentance was his *smiting his breast*; he knew his heart; he did not think it a good heart, as some very ignorant people speak; no, he knew the plague of his heart; he knew it was the seat and source of all his sins, and by smiting on his breast he seemed as if he would take revenge upon his own wicked heart; it expresses his indignation against himself, and the vehemence of his anger against sin. Men and brethren, what do you know of such a disposition as this? When was you thus angry with yourselves, and filled with shame and confusion of face because of your sins? Know this, that such is the temper of all who are taught of God; and if you have never felt in this manner, you are yet strangers to true repentance.

Now we come to his prayer. It was very short, but very good: no man ever offered a better, or to better purpose. Not that the mere words are of any avail: too many people use such words profanely, when they say on a surprise, God bless us! or, Lord, have mercy on us! but such praying as this is the way to get a curse, not a blessing. When the Publican said, God be merciful to me a sinner, he felt what he said; he felt he was a perishing sinner, and he felt an earnest desire for mercy. He

He calls himself *a sinner*, or *the sinner*, as some would render it, or *the chief of sinners*, as Paul called himself. The word *sinner* was a term of reproach among the Jews, and seemed to be applied chiefly to a harlot, or some notorious offender; but the Publican takes it to himself. It is very likely he spake this aloud, in the hearing of the Pharisee, and others who did not think themselves sinners; for he was not unwilling to appear before men what he well knew he was before God. He would not have been angry with that sort of preaching which lays men low; nor would he have been displeased with a friend who should have said, you are a very great sinner. But say, my friends, what would *you* think of a person who should charge *you* in that manner? Would you not be very angry, and say, I am no worse than others: but a true penitent can never find words sufficient to express the sense he has of his vileness.

If we know the meaning and extent of the ten commandments, we shall say after each of them, "Lord, have mercy upon us!" And if we see any thing of the holiness, majesty, and glory of the great God, we shall cry with Isaiah, "Woe is me, for I am undone;" or with Job, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." No person truly enlightened will say, as many have done, I am not a great sinner; for, in fact, there cannot be a little sinner, unless there were a little law to break, a little God to offend, and a little wrath to incur. It is too common for persons to comfort themselves with the idea that they are not such great sinners as some others; many dying people do this, and even wretches at the gallows have done so. But this is very absurd; for the question is not, whether we have sinned as much as others,

others, but whether we have sinned at all, that is, whether we have broken the holy law of God! If so, we are sinners, and stand exposed to the just wrath of the Most High; nor can we escape it but by partaking of that mercy for which the Publican prayed.

You will next observe that his sense of sin and danger put him upon prayer. Many people live without prayer; and what is the reason? They do not feel the need of mercy; for this is the first thing a convinced sinner prays for; and it is a good sign of grace when a desire for mercy sends a man to his knees. Angels rejoice on such an occasion, and point to the new-born soul, saying, "Behold, he prayeth!" My friends, do you pray for mercy? If not, how can you expect it; and what must become of you without it? O that you may begin to pray!

This poor man cried to the Lord; and whither can a creature fly for help but to God? He is our maker; he is our governor; he is our judge; he is able to save or destroy: he is offended with our sins, yet is he most gracious and ready to forgive. How reasonable then that a guilty, helpless sinner, ready to perish, should apply "to him that is able to save to the uttermost all who come to him by Jesus Christ."

He begs for MERCY. What is mercy? We know what it is by our own feelings. It is compassion to the miserable; it is a disposition to pity and relieve the distressed; and we never speak of *mercy* but with reference to *misery*. It is not then a light, unfeeling use of solemn words, that can encourage us to hope for mercy; it is not saying, without feeling, Lord have mercy upon us! Christ have mercy upon us! but it is coming with the publican's spirit, with his broken heart, with his remorse, with his desires, and in earnest prayer claiming this precious blessing.

Ob-

Observe, it is *mercy* he asks. Here is not a word of *merit*. Mercy and merit are opposite things. The Pharisee's prayer was a mere boast of meritorious deeds; the Publican has nothing to plead; nor does he ask for wealth, or honour, or pleasure; his heart is dead to these; all his desires centre in one, and that one is mercy.

"Mercy, good Lord, mercy I ask,
This is the total sum;
For mercy, Lord, is all my suit;
O let thy mercy come!"

But the petition, *be merciful*, includes something more than is commonly understood by it; the word translated *merciful* has respect to the atonement made by blood; to the sacrifices offered up at the temple; which were types of Christ, "whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood." Rom. iii. 25. At the temple, in the court of which the Publican stood, there was a lamb offered every morning at nine o'clock, and every evening at three; and these were the hours of prayer; so that the pious Jews came then to pray, that by virtue of the atonement of Christ represented by blood, and of his intercession represented by the incense, their prayers might find acceptance. His prayer then was—God be propitious to me a sinner—accept the atonement in my behalf—let my soul be cleansed in the blood of Christ. In this manner, by faith in Jesus, let us seek the mercy of God. Let us not dream of mere absolute mercy. "A God all mercy, is a God unjust." The mercy of God cannot be bestowed without regard to his justice. Now God has glorified his justice by punishing sin in the person of our glorious Redeemer, upon whom "he laid the iniquities of us all," and through whom he is, at once, "a just God and a saviour." In this way, and in
no

no other, can a sinner obtain mercy; for our Lord declares that "no man cometh to the Father but by him; and no mercy cometh to the sinner but through him; but in his dear name we may "come boldly to the throne of grace, and so obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need."

Thus came the Publican, and in this way he succeeded. It was not the depth of his humility, the sincerity of his repentance, nor the fervency of his devotion, that merited acceptance; these dispositions were the gifts of God, and could merit nothing; but it was the merit of the Redeemer's precious blood, typified by the blood of lambs, which he pleaded, and which shall never be pleaded in vain. Our Lord tells us, ver. 14. *This man went down to his house justified rather than the other, or, not the other; the reason of which he adds, for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.* O what a blessing! He went down to his house justified; there was no condemnation to him; he was accepted in the beloved; he had passed from death to life. Happy man; he might eat his bread with gladness, and drink his wine, or water either, with a merry heart, for God accepted his works.

APPLICATION.

Shall we not then "go and do likewise?" Are we not sinners? Fly instantly to the throne of grace. The Lord waits to be gracious. This is the accepted time; lose it not by delay. To-morrow may be too late. Now then, with the publican's spirit, let each of us cry, God, be merciful to me, the sinner!

But O beware of the Pharisee's spirit. Every man is born a Pharisee. Ask your little children why they hope to go to heaven, and if they have not been better taught, you will find their hope is, because they are not so bad as others. Would to God it were not so with grown-up persons too! But let no one dare to persist in a self-righteous course, "for he that exalteth himself shall be abased"—abased even to hell. Renounce then your own righteousness, as St. Paul, the converted Pharisee did, who says, Phil. iii. 7. "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ; yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him."

The Publican's success is a great encouragement to every sensible sinner seeking for mercy. Seek like him, and like him you shall obtain it. And O let those who have obtained it, be full of joy. "Praise the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever;" and as an evidence of having obtained mercy from God, shew mercy to men. "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful."

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THE PHARISEE AND PUBLICAN. SERM. XVII.

THE THARISSE AND PUBLICAN 12

But O beware of the Pharisee's spirit. Every man is born a Pharisee. All your little children with you will find them here. Would to God it were better for you than for others. God it were better for you than for others. But let us be in a self-righteous course, as he himself shall be. Admired as he is, let us be as he is. Own right things, as he did. What things were done to me, that I could do for Christ; yes, doubts, and I could do for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my

Zeal for the Salvation of Sinners.



S E R M O N

ON
ROMANS, x. i.

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.

TRUE religion consists chiefly in *love to God*, and *love to man*; and wherever one of these is found, there is the other also. It was love that brought the Saviour down from the throne of glory to this mean and wretched world, that he might "seek and save those who were lost." While he lived on earth, "he went about doing good;" and when he returned to heaven, he commanded his ministers and people to follow his example, *and to do good to all men as they had opportunity.* The apostles and first Christians gladly obeyed, and were very active in spreading abroad the knowledge of their gracious Master and his great salvation. Among these, St. Paul was one of the most zealous, as his great labours and affectionate writings fully testify. Our text is an expression of his strong desires for the salvation of Israel, or the Jews, who were his countrymen; and the particular reason of his anxiety about them was, because he knew they were not in the way to obtain salvation. It is true they had a zeal for religion, but it was not a zeal according to knowledge. They were under a very fatal mistake, which was their seeking salvation by their own works, for "they stumbled at that stumbling-stone,"

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stone," as, alas! many people called Christians do still. Knowing therefore their danger of being eternally lost, he expresses his feelings in these words—*My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.* And will you, my friends, who live in this place, permit us to say that we hope and trust we are moved by the same desire? If any persons should inquire, and it is natural and proper for them to inquire, why we come here, to pray, and sing, and read a sermon? we humbly reply, For no other reason upon earth than this, that we may promote your salvation; that we may stir you up to consider your need of it; that we may show you, from the gospel, the only true way of it; and that we may put you upon seeking it immediately.

We purpose to show you from these words,

I. That serious Christians plainly see the dangerous state in which many of their neighbours are.

II. That they earnestly desire their deliverance from it.

I. We observe that serious Christians plainly perceive the dangerous state of unconverted sinners around them. We cannot tell what the grace of God may do hereafter for the worst of men; and the condition of some may be doubtful; but in many cases, it is too evident that men "are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity," as St. Peter said of Simon Magus: at least, so much may be discovered as fully warrants our fears on their behalf. Now this sad condition of men appears,

1. *From their living in open sin*; for indeed "some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment;" some proclaim their sin as Sodom, and glory in their shame. St. Paul says, "the works of the flesh are manifest," among which he names *adultery, fornication, uncleanness, wrath, murder, and drunkenness*. Gal. v. 19. Our Saviour has directed us to judge of men by their fruits; *for every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit*; and he adds (observe his solemn words), *Every tree that*
bringeth

bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Matt. vii. 17. We are forced to conclude therefore that "if men live after the flesh, they must die;" that if they proceed in the broad road, it must be to destruction; and that "the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Some men are evidently "men of the world," "servants of sin," and "captives of Satan;" such, to whom our Lord said, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." When we see persons living in sinful pleasure, we know "they are dead while they live." How can we suppose the profane swearer has the fear of God, or that the sabbath-breaker has any regard for his own soul?

2. *Carelessness about religion* is another alarming symptom of a graceless, and therefore dangerous, state. There are many who have no concern about their souls or salvation. Like Gallio, they care for none of these things. But this carelessness is as strong a proof of being in a state of nature and of wrath as living in open sin is; for it is written, Heb. ii. 3. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" To neglect this salvation is to omit all those duties which are necessary to a profitable hearing and keeping the word preached. How many are there, who every sabbath turn their backs on the house of God, where his gospel is preached, and spend the day in idleness and sinful pleasure! How many are there, who are able to read the Bible, but who never look into that sacred book, that they may become wise to salvation! How many are there who never lift up their hearts to God in prayer for his teaching and his mercy! Now, how shall such escape? Those who despised the law of Moses died without mercy; but to despise the gospel is a greater crime, and deserves a greater punishment. Those who seek not mercy now, according to the gospel, shall never have it. "This is the acceptable time; this is the day of salvation: if this be neglected, let poor sinners expect no more to hear of mercy through all eternity."

3. For-

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3. *Formality in religion* is another evidence of being in a dangerous condition. There are some, who dare not omit all religious duties, public and private; but they are like the Pharisees, who "drew nigh to God with their mouth, and honoured him with their lips, but their heart was far from him;" by many religious ceremonies "they washed the outside of the cup and platter, but within they were full of extortion and excess." Matt. xv. and xxiii. How many say their prayers like parrots, without knowing their meaning! How many go to church only to see and be seen; and, when they come away, are full of mirth and folly; thinking no more of what has passed, and spending the rest of the day in worldly conversation, or amusement! Others think, that because they belong to a good church, and have been baptized, and say their prayers, and take the sacrament, all is well with them; while they are strangers to *heart-work* in religion; were never alarmed on account of their sins; never humbled for their sins; never fled to Jesus for refuge from their sins; and never knew any thing of that great change of heart, called in scripture, regeneration, or the new birth. Now, when we see our neighbours content with this poor empty form of godliness, and denying the power thereof, we cannot but be deeply concerned on account of their danger.

4. There is another thing which alarms us on their behalf; that is, *when we see them receive for truth, great and fundamental errors, as to the doctrines of religion.* We know it is commonly said, that it does not signify what a man believes, if he does but live a good life. But we testify against this opinion, as destructive of the souls of men. Did not the great Redeemer come into the world to enlighten it? Is he not the great teacher, who, by his word and spirit, reveals the will of God for our salvation? Has he not promised his people that they shall "know the truth, and the truth shall make them free?" And has he not said that his sheep hear and know his voice, but will not follow the voice

voice of a stranger? How then can error be harmless? The scripture speaks of "damnable heresies" as well as damnable vices. Surely it is of great importance that we have right views of the blessed God as to his holiness, justice, and mercy; that we have right views of ourselves as fallen, guilty, helpless sinners; and especially that we have right views of Jesus Christ, and of the nature and way of salvation through him by faith. It was the want of these, that made St. Paul use the words of our text. The Jews rejected Christ and his righteousness, and "went about to establish their own righteousness," ver. 3; thus they stumbled at Christ; and St. Paul knew that, if they died in this state, they must perish for ever: and this led him to say, "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." And this leads us to observe, in the next place,

II. That serious Christians earnestly and sincerely desire the salvation of their neighbours, whom they thus perceive to be in a dangerous state.

If love to our neighbour requires that we should pity and help him in a time of sickness, poverty, or any other kind of temporal distress, how much more that we should care for his soul, and labour to prevent his eternal ruin! All the love and politeness that worldly men shew to their neighbour, is for the perishing body; while they care not for the soul, but perhaps contribute much to its eternal destruction. But if the love of God be shed abroad in our heart, the salvation of souls will be the first object we have in view, and happy shall we be if we can in any wise be instruments in their future happiness; for,

1. We tremble to think of their future misery. We know assuredly that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." Rom. i. 18. We certainly know that all men are born in sin, and are children of wrath; and that without an interest in Christ by faith, and a heart changed by grace, no man shall see the Lord: that

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"the wrath of God abideth on every unbeliever," and that "he will render indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every man who dies in his sins," impenitent, unpardoned, unrenewed. Now can we think of our relations, our friends, our neighbours, being in this state, without pitying them, praying for them, and exhorting them to "fly from the wrath to come?" It is impossible! If any man can, how dwelleth the love of God in him? When our compassionate Saviour paid his last visit to Jerusalem, and from a hill beheld that great and wicked city, which, on account of unbelief, was to be destroyed in about forty years, he wept over it; though then surrounded with a multitude, crying, "Hosanna," he lamented over it with tears, saying, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." Luke, xix. 42. And may not we be permitted, with some small portion of the same love and compassion to our perishing neighbours, to say, O how happy would it be for you, now to know those things which are necessary to your present peace and everlasting salvation; lest, ere long, God should deprive you of the means of grace, and give you up to the blindness of your minds and the hardness of your hearts! It would shock us beyond measure to see one of you burning in a great fire, were it but for a few minutes; but who can think without horror of everlasting burnings? We therefore would, as St. Jude speaks, ver. 22, "save you with fear, pulling you out of the fire;" or, as St. Paul speaks, 2 Cor. v. 10, 11, "Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men."

2. As we wish to prevent your future destruction, so likewise we earnestly desire that you may share with us in the joys and glories of the heavenly world. We believe "there is a reward for the righteous;" that "the pure in heart shall see God;" that "in his presence is fulness of joy, and at his right hand there are pleasures for evermore." We believe that Christ is
gone

gone to heaven to prepare mansions for his people, and that in due time, they shall be with him, to behold his glory, to enter into his rest, to sit down with him on his throne, and to wear a crown of glory. We humbly hope, through Jesus, to partake of these blessings, and we would gladly take all the world along with us. We are grieved to think that any should despise the good land, slight the invitations of Heaven, or expect it on false grounds. We are grieved to think that so many cleave to the dust, and for the sake of the short-lived pleasures of sin, and a portion in this world, are in danger of losing eternal joys. This therefore puts us upon urging you to seek first the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof, that you may also be admitted into the kingdom of glory.

3. We wish you to know and enjoy the present pleasures of true religion. Let strangers to godliness say what they please, we maintain that the ways of wisdom are pleasantness, and her paths are paths of peace. Some of us have tried both the pleasures of sin and the pleasures of religion, and we are bold to say, there is more satisfaction in one hour's communion with God, than in days and months of sinful indulgence. We can say with David, "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." A good hope through grace, a knowledge of the pardon of our sins, a persuasion of the favour of God towards us, a belief that all things are working together for our good, and that we shall go to heaven when we die; together with the actual delight we find in prayer, praise, hearing, reading, and conversation with the people of God—these are joys that satisfy and sanctify the mind, and compared to which, all the frothy mirth and carnal pleasures of the wicked are mean as the toys of children, and hurtful as the sports of madmen. We wish you therefore, brethren, to be partakers of the grace of God, and we say to you as Moses to Hobab, "Come

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thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel." Numb. x. 29.

4. We wish the salvation of others *on account of the glory of God*, for which we feel ourselves concerned, and which will be promoted thereby. We are taught to pray, "hallowed be thy name." Let God be glorified! And surely, when a poor sinner ceases to be a rebel to his Maker, throws himself at the feet of mercy, and swears allegiance to the God of his salvation, the Lord is glorified. Satan loses another subject, and one is added to the kingdom of Jesus. The love of Christ constraineth us, and our loyalty to the King of heaven makes us long to see his kingdom flourish. We cannot tell of how great importance may be the value of one converted soul: a wife, a husband, the children of the family, the servants, the connexions, may all be the better for it; the gospel may be spread; more souls may be converted, and generations yet unborn may derive benefit from it. We would therefore compass sea and land to make a proselyte, not to our party, or any particular set, but that Jesus may be exalted; "for blessed be his glorious name for ever, and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and amen." Ps. lxxii. 19.

5. Again we wish for the salvation of sinners for the sake of the good of the nation where we dwell. True Christians are the salt of the earth, that keeps it from perishing. Sodom would have been preserved from destruction if ten righteous men could have been found in it. And may not we say, in these threatening times, "Except the Lord had left us a seed, we had been as Sodom, and been made like unto Gomorrah?" Rom. ix. 29. The prayers of God's people are a greater defence to their country than all its fleets and armies; and that kingdom is most likely to flourish, in which truth and righteousness most abound.

6. To say the truth, we are not without a little selfishness in this matter; for beside all the reasons before mentioned, *we have some view to our own peace and happiness.*

happiness. We do find that "the meanest service of Christ has refreshment in it." Our good Master sends not his servants on a warfare at their own charge. He that watereth the souls of others, shall himself be watered. We think the conversion of a soul to God, is the greatest honour and happiness, next to our own salvation, that we can enjoy; and though we know that no man has any claim upon God for what he does, all being unprofitable servants, and that the best action of man has no merit in it, yet we believe that there is a reward of grace for the faithful servants of Christ, who has promised that so small a gift as a cup of cold water given to any one, because he belongs to Christ, shall not be forgotten; and as to those whom he employs in his work, "they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever." Dan. xii. 3.

Let us now show, in what manner a desire for the salvation of sinners ought to be expressed; for this desire, when true, will not be idle, but active, and will put persons on earnest endeavours to accomplish it: and,

1. *By prayer.* The conversion of a soul, like the creation of the world, is the work of God alone. A real Christian is a new creature, "born, not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John, i. 13. St. Paul therefore, in our text, mentions, not only his "heart's desire," but "his prayer to God" also. Those who truly pray for themselves, will pray for others too. If a husband or a wife has a partner who knows not the Lord, prayer will be immediately offered. If a parent has an ungodly child, like Abraham he will cry, O that Ishmael might live before thee! or like the poor man, Matt. xvii. 15. Lord, have mercy upon my son. Thus Job rose early in the morning, and offered up ten offerings for his ten children; because he feared they had sinned against God in their feasts with each other.

2. *We*

TO ZEAL FOR THE SALVATION OF SINNERS.

2. *We should urge our friends to come and hear the gospel.* Do not be ashamed to invite them to hear that word, which God has made his power to your salvation. When Christ called Andrew to be his disciple, Andrew soon invited his brother Peter; and the day after, when Christ called Philip, Philip presently findeth Nathaniel, and invites him to come and hear Jesus. So when the Lord sent Peter to preach to Cornelius, a Roman officer, he found Cornelius had called together his kinsmen and friends, and they were all gathered together in a private house, as you may be here, to hear all things which God had commanded Peter to preach. O how many have had reason to bless God for ever, that some kind friend first invited them to go and hear a gospel sermon! Practise this, my friends; all of you who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, say to others, "O taste and see that the Lord is good." Sinners, as you all know, are very active to bring others into sin, and to invite them to plays and merry meetings; why should not we be more active to save souls, than sinners are to destroy them?

3. There is another way in which we should show our desire for the salvation of our fellow-creatures, and that is, *by the Christian education of children, our own, and our neighbours'.* Abraham was commended of God for this—"I know him, said the Lord, that he will command his children and his household after him;" and parents were ordered, by the law, Deut. vi. 7. "to teach their children the words of God diligently; to talk of them when they sat down in the house, when they walked by the way, when they lay down, and when they rose up." If parents with well to the souls of their children, they will try to inform their minds, bring them under the word, and restrain them as much as possible from sabbath-breaking and other sins. And as there are some parents who will not, or cannot, instruct their own children, let us do what we can for them. Why should one of these little

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ones perish, while Sunday schools may be kept up. The Lord prosper this good work, more and more. And to this we may add, constant regard to *family worship*, by those who are at the head of families. Surely they have little regard to the souls of children and servants, who do not daily read the scriptures, and pray with their families.

4. *Personal exhortation* is a great mean of good to the souls of men. *Exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.* How often has God blessed one sentence, spoken in his fear and love! "A word spoken in season, how good is it!" O let us try, whenever we can, mildly to reprove sin; and give a hint on all proper occasions, in companies, on journies, at work, whereby we may prove, if the Lord bless it, the instrument of our neighbours' conversion.

5. To all this, one thing more must necessarily be added, and that is, *a holy life*. Actions speak louder than words. "Let our light shine before men, that they, seeing our *good works*," as well as hearing our good words, "may glorify God." There is a testimony for God in the life of a holy man, that the wicked may despise, but cannot resist. Thus let all Christians hold forth the word of life, "that so, even the prejudiced, who will not hear the word, may, without the word, be won by our conversation." 1 Pet. iii. 1.

APPLICATION.

Men and brethren: Is it the duty and practice of all real Christians to be thus affectionately concerned for the salvation of others?—Should not you be much more concerned for your own salvation; you, who have hitherto totally neglected it? O consider the value of your souls. Are you not sinners? And must you not soon receive the wages of your sins, unless they are pardoned for Christ's sake? And can you expect pardon without seeking it? O then be wise. Rouse yourselves

12 ZEAL FOR THE SALVATION OF SINNERS.

selves from your dreadful stupidity. Cry to God for his mercy and grace, lest you perish. This is the day of salvation. To you is the word of salvation sent. O that it may not be sent in vain! Jesus Christ is a great and gracious Saviour; he was never known to reject one perishing sinner who came to him for life. Let this be an encouragement to you to apply to him, and you will find him able and willing to save to the utmost.

6 JU 62

From what has been said, we may learn the nature of true grace, how it opens the heart, and shows itself in love to God and man. This may afford some comfort to those who fear they are destitute of it. Ask your hearts whether they do not long for the salvation of your fellow-men? and whether you do not, with Christ, angels, and all good men, rejoice in their conversion? If so, it is a good evidence of grace. On the contrary, those selfish souls who can be content to go to heaven alone, while they care not if all around them perish, while they make no one effort to rescue them from destruction; such persons have reason to fear; for if we love not our neighbour whom we have seen, how can we love God whom we have not seen?

Finally, let every serious hearer suffer the word of exhortation. See, in St. Paul, a pattern of holy zeal, and imitate it. Like him, let it be your hearts' desire and prayer to God, that Israel may be saved. Look around you, and see, who is there to whom you may be useful? Consider by what means you may best advance the glory of the great Redeemer, by bringing souls to him. Remember that life is short, and all opportunities of usefulness will cease. Work then while it is day, for the night of death is coming, in which no man can work. "Serve your generation according to the will of God," and then enter into the promised rest; where, with all the redeemed, you shall glorify the riches of free grace to all eternity.

*The Prodigal Son; or, the Penitent
joyfully received.*



S E R M O N

ON

LUKE, xv. 24.

*For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was
lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.*

JESUS Christ came into the world to save sinners; he therefore behaved in a kind and affable manner to all, even to some who had been very great sinners. This offended the Jews, and especially the self-righteous Pharisees. They thought that a holy prophet should have nothing to do with such bad people; not considering that he went among them on purpose to save them from their sins. But Jesus Christ vindicates his conduct, by appealing to the custom of men in general, who always rejoice when they recover any valuable thing that was lost. In this beautiful and affecting parable we have,

I. The prodigal's sin and folly, in departing from his father, and living in a riotous manner.

II. His repentance and return.

III. His kind reception.

IV. The envy of his elder brother upon that occasion.

SERM. XVIII.

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I. We

I. We have the prodigal's sin and folly, *v. 11—13.*
A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me: and he divided unto them his living. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

The prodigal son is an emblem of a sinner. He disliked the restraint of his pious father. He wanted to be his own master; to live in a state of independence, and to be governed by his own corrupt judgment. The language of sinners is, "Let us break his bonds asunder, and cast away his cords from us;" "they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have if we pray unto him?" Job, xxi. 14. All natural men are, like the prodigal, men of the world, and want their portion in this life, regardless of a portion in heaven: and, like him, they wish to live at a distance from God, and, as much as possible, "without God, in the world."

But let us stop a moment, and ask whether this is not a picture of ourselves. Has not each of us, more or less, acted the same part? Is there not in us, even in us, an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God? Is not this the reason that so many forsake the house of God, even on the Lord's day—that they dislike to hear God speak to them in his preached word—that they refuse to speak to God in their prayers—and that they despise truly religious persons, who are of the family of God? Surely all this arises from hearts "alienated from the life of God;" this is "the carnal mind," which is enmity against him.

Observe now, how he behaves in the distant country to which he went. Probably he told his father that he would traffic with his money, and so mend his fortune;

fortune; or, at least, that he would travel for the improvement of his mind: but he no sooner gets his portion into his hands, and becomes his own master, than he enters upon a loose, lewd, riotous way of life, in the company of bad women and other wicked companions. Thus he *wasted* his substance, and abused the gifts of God; gave himself up to luxury and “*lavishness*, to work all uncleanness with greediness.”

See the consequence of being left to ourselves; the misery of departing from God! and O, beware of wasting his gifts! Our reason, our health, our strength, our time, our money, our influence, are all talents committed to our trust: let them be used to promote the glory of God and the salvation of our souls, and not abused to the purposes of sin and destruction.

Mark now, my friends, how certainly misery follows sin. Ver. 14. *When he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.*

Here is a proof of the truth of that old proverb—

“*Willful waste brings woful want.*” See how the

pleasures of sense perish in the using: “*for as the*

crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the

fool:” a noisy blaze, succeeded by dismal darkness.

Let this, as Solomon advises, “*keep thee from the evil*

woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange

woman; for by means of a whorish woman a man is

brought to a piece of bread. She hath cast down many

wounded. Her house is the way to hell, going down

to the chambers of death.” Prov. vi. 24. and vii. 26.

What was become of the prodigal’s gay friends?

Would none who had feasted at his table come forward

to supply his wants? No: they all deserted him.

Place no dependance on sinful companions. Many

adore the rising sun, who turn their backs upon it

when it sets. And how just it is, that he, who acts as

an enemy to God, should not be able to find a friend

among men!

One should have thought that now, in his adversity, he would have turned his thoughts homeward. Surely this was a proper time for serious reflection. But he was not sufficiently humbled: rather than go back to his father, he will submit to the most servile state. *Ver. 15. He went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed the swine.* It is no disgrace in this country to be a servant, or to feed any sort of cattle; but you are to observe that he was a Jew, and as swine's flesh was forbidden to the Jews, there could be nothing more odious and abominable to him than the care of swine. It seems too, that this gay youth was a poor worthless creature, and, notwithstanding his education, fit for no better employment. O how are the mighty fallen, and how is the fine gentleman degraded!

But far greater is the disgrace of sinful man. Created at first in the image of God; honourable and happy in communion with him; see him now fallen from his high estate, become a servant of sin, yea a slave of the devil: a companion of beasts; yea, himself, as Bishop Hall speaks, "Half a beast and half a devil!" Whatever sinners may think of themselves, their wretched business is no other than the prodigal's; they are "making provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof," and that is no better than feeding greedy, dirty, noisy swine.

Disgraceful as his employment was, could he have got wholesome, though plain, food, he might have made himself content. But, to fill up the measure of his misery, we find he was almost starved to death. Having, perhaps, a hard-hearted master, and that in a time of famine, he had not a morsel of bread; he must not only feed the swine, but feed with them, and eat the same food. *Ver. 16. He would fain have filled his belly with the husks which the swine did eat—wild chesnuts, probably, or some such trash, not fit for a*
man

man to eat; but though he would have been glad of them, he could not get them, or not enough of them, to satisfy his hunger.

Here also is a picture of the sinner. Husks are food for swine, not for men; so the things of this world are no more fit to satisfy the immortal soul, than husks to feed the body. They suit not our nature, nor satisfy our desires.

“Why seek ye that which is not bread,

Nor can your hungry souls sustain?

On ashes, husks, and air ye feed;

Ye spend your little all in vain.”

II. Let us now proceed to a more pleasing part of the subject. “It is a long lane, they say, which has no turning,” and yet, alas! thousands go on all their days in the way to eternal ruin! But here we have an instance of a sinner, reduced to the last extremity, to whom his afflictions were sanctified, beginning to repent and return to God. Ver. 17. *And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!*

“He came to himself”—remarkable expression! He had been *beside himself*; he had acted the part of a madman; and indeed, “the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart.” Eccles. ix. 3. Do madmen mistake their own condition, and fancy themselves kings and emperors? So do poor sinners; they think themselves spiritually “rich, and increased with goods, &c. and know not that they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” Madmen are often desperately mischievous, and even self-murderers. So are all sinners. What madness can be equal to the eternal destruction of the soul for the sake of a few momentary pleasures? Yes, we are all far from ourselves, when we are far from God; and we never return to ourselves, till God, in mercy,

mercy, return to us. Regard not then the foolish reproach of the world, who will say, when you are truly concerned for your souls, that you are mad. No; they are the madmen who live in sin; you, who are coming to God, have come to yourselves.

The prodigal compares his own wretched state with the condition of his father's meanest servants. "I am starving; they are feasting. I am miserable; they are happy." Just so, a repenting sinner plainly perceives his own miserable case, and longs to partake of their happiness, who live in the house of God, and are his devoted servants. "I perish," said he; so may every man say who lives in sin, "I perish: but there are others (O that I were one of them!) who dwell in the house of the Lord; feast upon his rich grace; know that their sins are pardoned, and are full of peace and joy in believing."

What is the natural consequence of such a comparison? Why, an effort, an immediate effort, to mend his condition. Hope springs up in his heart; and though there was but a may-be, a mere peradventure, of success, he makes the following wise resolution: ver. 18, 19. *I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.*

He resolves to return to his father. Now, what is conversion, but the sinner's return to God? This is what God calls us to in his word—"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Isa. lv. 7. But with what spirit will he return? Will he feign an excuse, and go with a lie in his mouth? Will he say, "Sir, I have been very unfortunate; I have been robbed of my property; been deceived by swindlers; or had a ship sunk at sea?" Or, will he plead his youth and indiscretion, and say, "Though

"Though I have done wrong, I had a *good heart*!" Such, my friends, are the wretched excuses of unhumiliated sinners. But the prodigal now perceived the plague of his own heart: he was "poor in spirit;" he would make no excuses; but own his guilt, and confess he was unworthy to be treated as a son; he would be contented and thankful to be admitted into the kitchen or the scullery. "Make me as one of thy hired servants." Thus will it be with every true penitent; he will give glory to God by making full confession of his sin, and will sincerely admit that he is totally unworthy of the grace and mercy of God.

Observe; he says, "I have sinned *against Heaven*"—against the God of Heaven; against the high authority of God, and against the wonderful goodness of God. It is a foolish and hurtful mistake of some people, when they speak of a drunkard, or some other wicked man, to say—"he hurts none but himself." It is true, sinners hurt themselves; but they also offend and provoke the God of Heaven; and in true repentance, the sinner, like the prodigal and like the Psalmist, will say, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." *Before thee*, said he: the prodigal had sinned against his father, by throwing off his easy yoke; and let young people remember, that disobedient and undutiful behaviour to their parents is a sin against God, that needs his pardoning mercy, and must be repented of. Think of this, children.

Shall we pause a moment—and ask ourselves, whether we find in *our* hearts a disposition like that of the prodigal? We have all *sinned* with him, but which of us *repents* with him? Depend upon it, we shall not think of returning to God, till we feel the misery of departing from him. We have forsaken God, we have set up for our own guides, we have abused the gifts of God, we have been the slaves of sin; and have we not found emptiness, insufficiency, dissatisfaction, misery,

fery, and danger in this condition? If not, may God open our eyes, and help us to discover it. If we are convinced of these things, let us make the prodigal's resolution, "I will arise;" and not only make it, but execute it; for we read, ver. 20. *He arose, and came to his father.* There are many good resolutions formed, which come to nothing. It has been said, that "hell is paved with good resolutions;" perhaps there is not one unhappy creature there, who did not at one time or other say, "I will arise and go to my father;" but their resolutions died away. The prodigal, however, arose, and began his journey—a long journey—for you will remember that he went into "a far country." Ah! who can tell what painful fears and doubts assailed his mind on the way? Hunger had brought him very low; and he might have said, "How can these trembling limbs carry me so many miles? I must beg my way; perhaps I may die on the road; and, oh! if I live to reach the place, how can I bear the sight of the house? My father, my offended father, will refuse to see me; forbid me the house; and after all my labour, I may be rejected, and justly too. But, however, though I may perish if I go, I must perish if I stay. I will arise, and go to my father.—He goes. He continues his journey; and, at length, after many a weary step, and many a toilsome day, he catches a glimpse of the mansion: he halts; his heart beats; a thousand fears rush into his mind. Ah! what shall I do? What shall I say?

Just then, for so Providence ordered it, *when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him.* Ver. 20. This is the

third Thing we are to consider: his kind reception. God's eyes are upon all his creatures. "He looketh upon men," to see if there be any that regard, any that return; and the very first motions of the heart

heart towards him are noticed. "He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; he will deliver his soul from going down into the pit, and his life shall see the light." Job, xxxiii. 28.

He had compassion. A parent can readily conceive what tender feelings would be excited by the sight of a long-lost child, returning in this miserable plight; and by these feelings the God of mercy is pleased to express his perfect readiness to receive and forgive a repenting sinner.

He ran. The prodigal, perhaps, stopped short, afraid to venture on; but the father runs; forgetting his age, and the gravity of his character; he runs to meet him; impatient to embrace him. *He fell on his neck, and kissed him;* though ragged, though filthy, though lately come from feeding swine. Any other than a father would have loathed; but the parent loves, and manifests his love by his affectionate embraces.

What a wonderful display is this of the love of God! It is thus that God prevents us with the blessings of his goodness. It is thus that repenting sinners are welcomed by the God of mercy. Hear it, O my friends, hear it for your encouragement, that our God is "ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness." Nehem. ix. 17. Hear his own words: Jer. xxxi. 18. "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus: Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; turn thou me, and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth." This is the language of Ephraim's repentance. Now hear the language of God's compassion, ver. 20. "Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? For since

since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled for him: I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord. Yes, sirs; God, for Christ's sake, keeps mercy in store for the chief of sinners who return to him.

Now what effect had this kind behaviour on the prodigal? Did it make him suppress his intended confession? Did it prevent the humiliation he resolved upon? No; it rather increased his contrition and godly sorrow. An awakened sinner is affected and melted down with the discoveries of God's free, full, pardoning love in Christ Jesus, it appears so great, so undeserved, and so excellent.

"Law and terrors do but harden,
All the while they work alone;
But a sense of blood-bought pardon,
Soon dissolves a heart of stone."

The prodigal no sooner meets his father than he cries, *Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son*—he was going on; he would have said more; but the father stopped him, and said to his servants, who with surprise had followed him, and gathered round to behold the affecting scene,—*Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.* Ver. 22—24.

The prodigal was half naked; he is clothed, and that with a robe; the dress of a prince rather than of a servant. He had the appearance of a wretched slave: the ornaments of a free man were put upon him. He was ready to starve; the most delicate food is prepared for him. He was almost overwhelmed with grief; cheerfulness and joy now fill his heart. Thus, the lower a penitent sinks in humility, the higher will God

God

God raise him, and heap upon him the greater benefits. The reconciled sinner shall be treated as a child; he shall be clothed with the garments of salvation, with the righteousness of Christ; he shall have the seal of adoption, and the graces of the Spirit enabling him to walk in the ways of God.

We have scarcely time to notice, in the fourth place, the behaviour of his ill natured elder brother; suffice it to say, it was a picture of the Pharisees; and represents the character of many, "who value themselves on the regularity of their own conduct, and betray a strong aversion to the rich grace of the gospel, which is extended to the greatest sinners; they are offended that no peculiar compliment is paid to their excellence, and that others whom they despised are put on a level with them." Thus Christ reproves them.

CONCLUSION.

Men and brethren: There are two things in this parable which I trust you will not forget—the *folly of sinners*, and the *compassions of God*. Let each one of us consider, whether he has not ungratefully run away from God—disliked his restraints—been wise in his own conceit—indulged forbidden lusts—and abused the bounties of Heaven? And yet perhaps totally insensible of the evil of so base a conduct. In the midst of prosperity there was not a thought of returning to God; and even in affliction trying any other method rather than that. But surely it is high time to bethink ourselves. May divine grace bring us all to ourselves, as the necessary mean of bringing us to God. Let us resolve, without a moment's delay, to humble ourselves at his feet; and let us be encouraged to do so, by the affecting account we have heard of God's kindness. "He sees afar off the returning sinners; he pities, he meets, he pardons, he embraces them. He arrays them with
the

the robe of the Redeemer's righteousness; adorns them with the ornaments of sanctifying grace; honours them with the tokens of adopting love; and invests them with all the privileges of his dear children." O that we may feel the charming force of these heavenly attractions! May there be joy in heaven and earth this day on our account; and may we, thus received into the house of God, abide there all the days of our life, admiring and adoring the sovereign, free, and everlasting grace of God; and saying: "Behold! what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."

"The mighty God will not despise
The contrite heart for sacrifice;
The deep-fetched sigh, the secret groan,
Rises accepted to his throne.

"He meets with tokens of his grace,
The trembling lip, the blushing face;
His bowels yearn when sinners pray,
And Mercy bears their sins away."

6 JUL 62

Lord, after all thou hast said, we are
James. xix.

Christ the Way to God and Heaven.



S E R M O N

ON
JOHN, xiv. 6.

I am the way.

IF we believe there is a future state of happiness, called heaven, and a future state of misery, called hell, there can be nothing of greater consequence to us, than that we may obtain the one and escape the other. If we have any serious thoughts of these things, we cannot but inquire, Which is the true way to heaven? Every thing that calls itself *Religion* pretends to be the way; but, as there are so many different ways, they cannot all be right: yea, we are bold to say they are all wrong, except *one*, and that one is declared in the text; *I am the way*, said Jesus; *no man cometh to the Father, but by me*. Our Lord spake these words to his disciples when they were full of trouble because he was about to leave them. He comforts them by saying he was going to heaven, his Father's house, to prepare a place for them; and that he would come again, and receive them to himself, that where he was they also might be; and he then adds, "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." But Thomas, who was rather of a doubtful turn of mind, replied—Lord, after all thou hast said, we are

2 CHRIST THE WAY TO GOD AND HEAVEN.

still at a loss about the place where thou art going, and how then can we know the way to follow thee? Jesus then answered, *I am the way*; which is as if he had said, I am the Mediator between God and man; I am the means of intercourse between heaven and earth; whatever comes from God to a sinner, comes through me; and whatever, of an acceptable kind, goes from a sinful man to God, must pass through my hands. In treating upon these very important and useful words we shall show—

I. *To what, Christ is a way*; and

II. *What sort of a way he is.*

I. We are to consider, *What Christ is a way to.* Every way or road leads from some place to another: now, as he is pleased to call himself *a way*, in condescension to our mean capacities, we are to consider, what he is the way *from*, and what he is the way *to*. We are to remember that we are fallen, guilty creatures, in a state of sin, and liable to all miseries here and hereafter; and that we are far from God, from righteousness, and from heaven: now, if ever we are brought back to God and a state of grace here, and to a state of glory hereafter, it must be in and through Jesus Christ alone. We say then, that Christ is *the way to God, and the way to heaven.*

The first of these is directly expressed by our blessed Lord in the text: *I am the way; no man cometh to the Father but by me.* When man was first created, he lived in a happy state of nearness to God; he knew God, and delighted in him as his chief good; but sin, cursed sin, soon made a dreadful separation; and now we come into the world “estranged from God, and go astray from the womb;” we desire absence from God: “he is not in all our thoughts;” but we seek happiness in sin and folly. Yet is the Lord our God pleased to invite us back to him, by the promises and blessings of his gospel, and by the ordinances of his house. And although multitudes despise these, and madly resolve to pursue the way of destruction, yet a
happy

SERMON XIX.

3

happy few there are, who hear the voice of the Son of God in his word, are made sensible that, being far from him, they must perish, and that it is good for them to draw nigh to him. But these persons have oftentimes such an awful view of the glorious and dreadful majesty of God, as an infinitely holy and just being, and of the distance that sin has occasioned, that they know not how to approach him. The prophet Micah thus expresses the anxious desires of such an one, chap. vi. 6. "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? Blessed be the Lord, he hath showed us what is good." He hath given us a full answer to these inquiries in our text. Jesus is the way. It is not by costly offerings of blood or oil, nor at the dreadful expence of sacrificing a darling child, but Jesus is the way. He not only came to show us the way, but to be the way. He did not come to tell us how we may "make our peace with God," as some express themselves, but to be our peace, for he made peace with the blood of his cross. It is by the death of Jesus that we draw near to God; so St. Peter tells us, "He suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." We were far from him, we had neither the will nor the power to return; and sin, if not atoned for, must have made an everlasting separation between a holy God and vile sinners; but Jesus, who was perfectly just and righteous, endured the most shameful and painful sufferings on the cross for us, that is, in our room and stead, that he might reconcile us to God, and bring us to a holy conformity to him and happy communion with him here, and to the eternal enjoyment of him hereafter.

In this way, that is, in Jesus, we have free access

to the glorious Majesty of heaven; we may, by prayer in his name, "come with boldness to the throne of grace," there to "obtain mercy and find grace to help us." Hear what St. Paul says upon this matter, Heb. x. 19, &c. "Having, therefore, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the vail, that is to say, his flesh—let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith." What a glorious privilege is this! We may approach the great God, as our reconciled God and Father; we may use holy freedom with him in our prayers; we have this liberty of access by the merit of Christ's blood, and by the application of it to our consciences through faith therein. This is the way prepared for our use, even Jesus, who is "the way, the truth, and the life;" he is the truth and substance of all the ordinances of the Old Testament; with particular reference to the rending of that vail which separated the holy of holies in the temple from the holy place; and which rending took place at the moment of our Saviour's death; which signified that now the way to God and heaven is laid open for all believers; and this is the second thing proposed.

2. *Jesus Christ is the way to heaven.* This indeed follows the other; for if we come to God by Jesus as our reconciled Father; if sin be pardoned, and we are admitted to a life of holy communion with him here, it is certain that we shall also have "an abundant entrance into his heavenly kingdom and glory." Jesus died to "redeem us to God," to his favour and image here, and to his glory hereafter. He died to "bring many sons to glory;" that they may be "satisfied with the goodness of his house, even of his holy temple;" that they may be "pillars in that temple never more to go out;" that they may approach him in a more sublime way of worship than at present, without the help of means and ordinances; that they may "see him face to face," without

without a cloud to hide his glory from them, and without the clog of sinful flesh and blood. Now Jesus is the only way to heaven. This is the record of the gospel—God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Here it is, and no where else; and whoever thinks to get to heaven another way, misses the true road, and will be eternally disappointed. There are many ways to hell, but only one to heaven; and if Jesus be not our way, we shall never get thither. As sinners, we have forfeited heaven and deserved hell; but Jesus Christ has not only redeemed his people from the curse, that they may not go to hell, but by his perfect obedience, or righteousness, he has procured for them a title to heaven. The righteousness of Christ is to, and upon, all who believe in him; it is transferred to them, imputed to them, or reckoned to their account, as if they had themselves performed it; and on this ground it is that they are admitted into the realms of light and glory: therefore are they before the throne, because they have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; and not on account of any goodness, virtue, or good works, of their own.

Beside this, there is a fitness for heaven, a meanness of disposition, and capacity of enjoyment, for that holy state, without which no man can see the Lord: for it is plain that a wicked man, a carnal man, could not enjoy heaven, were he admitted into it; there must therefore be a change of heart, a love of God and holiness, as well as a title to glory. This also we have from Jesus Christ. We are not pardoned by his blood, and then sanctified by our own endeavours (though these also are to be used), but Christ is made unto us sanctification. It is by the Spirit of Christ, dwelling and working in us, that we are renewed in the spirit of our minds; the love and power of sin mortified; the world, with all its vanities, crucified to us; and we led unto a spiritual life of communion with God here, as the preparation and pledge of our eternal

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happiness in heaven. Thus is Jesus, in every point of view, the way to heaven.

Having briefly shown that Christ is the way to God and heaven, let us stop a moment, and ask ourselves whether we have any desire that he may be our way in these respects? Are there not some who are so far from willing to draw nigh to God, that their hearts and lives plainly say, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways?" You dare not say so in words; but your actions say so. God and sin cannot reign in the same heart; and when you choose sin and indulge it, you do in effect say—"God, begone! I hate your company. I love your enemy, I love sin, and will submit to the devil's rule. I want nothing to do with you. I hate prayer. I hate the Bible. I hate the saints." This is horrid language, and you dislike the sound of the words; but is not this the fair language of your profane cursing and swearing, of your lust and lewdness, fornication and uncleanness? Is not this the language of your sabbath-breaking, and contempt of religious ordinances and means of grace? When you get drunk, and swear, and lie, or steal, or commit any bad action, do you not say, Depart from me, and let sin and Satan have me? O my friends, consider what will be the end of these things. You must die; and then appear before God; a holy, a just, an offended God; and should you not inquire, How may I come before him acceptably? Remember then that Jesus is the way, and O that you may be made "willing in the day of his power," to come to him for pardon and life; for he is able to save to the uttermost, all who come to God by him.

The same may be said of Christ as the way to heaven. Oh! how many care nothing about heaven! "And can it be supposed that any man will ever come to heaven, who never thought of it before he came thither?" No indeed. It is the prize set before us, and the Christian must so run as to obtain it, and there is no way to run in, but Jesus Christ. Most

men

men hope to go to heaven when they die; and yet few consider whether they are in the right way. As Christ only is the way, let any person inquire, when any thing is proposed to him as the way, *Is it Christ?* If men say, Good works are the way, ask, Are good works Christ? If they say, Baptism and the Lord's supper are the way, ask again, Are these Christ? Is repentance Christ? Are alms Christ? This is a very easy method of coming to the truth. Christ is the way; and therefore, whatever is not Christ, is not the way. He, then, only, being the way, let us

II. Show what sort of a way Christ is.

1. Christ is a *new* way; so he is called, Heb. x. 22. Not that the way of salvation by Christ is a new invention, for he is "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Adam, Abel, and Abraham, went to heaven in this way; but it is called *new* because there was one before it. The first way, in which it was proposed to man to be happy, was by his own innocence and perfect obedience; and if Adam had not sinned, this would have been his way to heaven: but as soon as he sinned, and fell, and we in him, this way was shut up for ever: so that there never was a soul got to heaven in the way of works, nor ever will. This way, by grace, came after the other, and in stead of it, and is therefore called a *new* way.

It is called *new* because it was *newly made*, when the New Testament was written. Jesus Christ had lately died to become this way. It is *new*, because newly and more plainly revealed in gospel times than it was before; and because it will always be new, and never give place to any other.

2. It is a *living* way. This way to heaven was by Christ's dying; yet it is called a living way; because all our life springs from his death. Christ is the life of all that live spiritually or eternally. This way is trodden only by such. All who are in this way are alive to God; and what is more, they shall never die.

The

The eternal life of all who are in Christ, and walk in him, is secure; for because he lives they shall live also. No man ever died upon this road. I am, saith Christ, *the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die.*

The body indeed must die, because of sin, though that is more properly called *sleep* in the New Testament, and the body shall be raised in glory; "but the spirit is life, because of righteousness," and shall never perish, but have everlasting life.

3. It is a *plain* way. Some ways are hard to find; have many turnings and windings and cross paths; but this way is easy to find, and to keep. The prophet Isaiah, speaking of it, says, *the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.* Isa. xxxv. 8. It is an infinite mercy that the things which belong to our peace are not difficult. There are, it is true, deep and difficult things in the Bible; but the grand truths which concern our salvation are perfectly plain and easy. What can be plainer than what is said about our fallen, sinful, helpless state, as sinners? or about Jesus Christ, as the only all-sufficient Saviour? or about our duty, as saved sinners, towards God and man? It is a great blessing to poor people that these things are so plain, and that God by his Spirit makes them so, even to "babes and sucklings;" for "the entrance of his words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple."

4. It is a *free* way. There are *private* ways that belong to great men, and they are open to few; it would be a trespass for a stranger to be found in them; but this is a *public* way, the *King's high way*. St. Paul says, *it is consecrated*, that is, appointed, dedicated, devoted to this purpose, and free for the use of all who desire to travel in it. There are no bars or toll-gates, where travellers must pay for permission to enter or proceed; for salvation is "without money and without price." Isa. lv. 1. It is a way prepared

on purpose for the use of *sinners*, who are returning to God; and no objections are made to any such persons. No worthiness, nor qualifications, nor conditions, are required of the traveller; whosoever will, may come and welcome. It is a free way.

5. It is a *safe and sure way*. It is a firm solid road, there is no danger of sinking in it, for Christ is the rock of ages. It suffers no alteration by rains and floods, as other ways do; it is passable at all times; there is nothing at any time to hinder our access to God, and progress to heaven. Nor is there any occasion to fear enemies upon it. There are such, but they cannot prevail. "The devil (says one) has been busy upon this road for above five thousand years, but yet never slew one believer;" for every traveller is kept by the power of God, through faith, to salvation. So that he may walk on with boldness, and fear no evil; rejoicing to think that every believer that once set his foot in this way, has been enabled to proceed, and not one of them failed of "receiving the end of his faith, even the salvation of his soul."

6. It is a *pleasant way*. The scripture says, "the ways of wisdom are pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Satan invites men to travel in the ways of sin, under the notion of their being pleasant; and there certainly are pleasures in sin; but they are for a short season; they are now mingled with bitter pains and pangs of conscience, and they will issue in misery everlasting. But "the ransomed of the Lord," who return to the heavenly Zion, "shall come with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads." Believers are called upon to "rejoice always in the Lord." Those who travel in this way are not only secure from harm, as you have heard, but the Lord has engaged for their supply on the road; he has promised that "they shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of his house, and drink of the rivers of his pleasure." They shall "sit under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit be sweet to their taste." They shall enjoy the company

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pany of the saints as their fellow-travellers, with whom their communion shall be sweet. Yea, the Lord of the way himself has promised to bear them company, and has said, "Fear not, for I am with thee;" and, "I will never leave nor forsake thee."

Lastly, It is the *only* way. Many ways to God and heaven have been proposed by mistaken men, under the influence of the great deceiver, the devil; and it is too commonly supposed that *any way* will do, if a man is but sincere in it. But this cannot be true; for if any way of man's invention might suffice, what occasion was there for Christ to come from heaven, obey the law, and endure the curse, that he might become our way? for, "if righteousness come by the law," or men can be their own saviours, or partake of the mercy of God without an atonement, all the vast expense of Christ's sufferings and death might have been spared; yea, in that case, "the grace of God is set aside, and Christ is dead in vain." Gal. ii. 21. But Christ crucified is the *only way*; so St. Peter solemnly declares, Acts, iv. 12. *Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is no name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved.* There is salvation in his name: it was procured by him, and he ever lives to bestow it: it is also published by divine authority; it is given forth in the preached gospel: but there is no other, *under heaven*, given for that purpose; none given by God's orders: if any others are given, it is by impostors and deceivers. Jesus only is the way to God and heaven. Thus you see that Christ is a *new way*—a *living way*—a *free way*—a *safe way*—a *pleasant way*, and the *only way*.

APPLICATION

My dear friends, suffer me to remind you that as certainly as there is a way to heaven, and Christ is that way, so certainly there is a way to hell, and *sin* is that way; and so surely as the believer in Christ shall arrive at heaven, so surely shall the sinner, going on

in his wicked way, get to hell at last. O sirs, do not despise this! Do not laugh at it! It becomes you to be serious in serious matters. "Now therefore, thus saith the Lord, *Consider your ways.*" The scripture speaks of a *false way*, a *crooked way*, a *perverse way*, a *wicked way*. Now what is your way? Is it the way of the flesh, the way of the world? Then, give me leave to tell you, "it leadeth to destruction." The Lord's eye is upon you. He knows the way you take; and "the way of the wicked is an abomination to him." Now, it is possible, you may be deceived concerning the way you are in; you may think it safe, while you are in the utmost danger, for, *the way of the wicked seduceth them*, Prov. xii. 26; and the scripture declares, that *there is a way which seemeth right to a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death*. Prov. xiv. 12. Is it not then your wisdom to examine very carefully whether you are in the right way or not? and as the heart is very deceitful, let me recommend it to you to pray for the Lord's help, lest, after all, you should be deceived. Let me advise you to use that prayer which you will find in the 130th Psalm, the 23d verse—*Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

Listen to the voice from heaven, which invites you in these words—*Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon*. Isa. lv. 7. Let it be your prayer that God would teach you his way, and convert you from the error of your own ways: and for this purpose, read and hear the word of God. Say to your companions, in the words of the Prophet—*Come ye, and let us go to the house of God, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths*. Isa. i. 3. *O that God may direct your feet into the way of peace!*

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Is Christ the way to God? then, believers, make daily use of him as such. Come boldly to the throne of grace. This is a way consecrated for you, and free for your use. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Remember he is a living way. Live upon him, and live to him. Let others see you are in Christ, by your walking not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit. Remember he is a sure way; you may walk with confidence in it, without fear of miscarrying: "He is faithful who hath promised." Christ has promised to keep his sheep, and that none shall pluck them out of his hand. The world may oppose and Satan oppose, but "greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world," and "if God be for us, who can be against us?"

Is Christ the way to heaven? and are any of you in him? look forward with joyful hope of the glory of God. Bless him for bringing you out of the paths of destruction, and leading you into the way of peace. Love Jesus, for becoming your way, at such an expense to himself; and be concerned to walk even as he walked. Thus shall you recommend this way to others, and constrain them to say, We will go with you, for God is with you of a truth.

"Thus will I tell to sinners round,
What a dear Saviour I have found;
I'll point to thy redeeming blood,
And say, Behold the way to God!"

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This is the way to God, and heaven. It is the way of life, and peace. It is the way of truth, and righteousness. It is the way of holiness, and purity. It is the way of love, and mercy. It is the way of grace, and favour. It is the way of glory, and honour. It is the way of life, and peace. It is the way of truth, and righteousness. It is the way of holiness, and purity. It is the way of love, and mercy. It is the way of grace, and favour. It is the way of glory, and honour.

CHRIST THE WAY TO GOD AND HEAVEN

Coming Sinners welcome to Christ



S E R M O N

JOHN, vi. 37.

Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

TWO things are necessary to encourage a convinced sinner to come to Christ for salvation: the one is, that he is *able* to save; the other is, that he is *willing*. Of the former, few comparatively doubt. And who can doubt at all, if he believes that Christ is the great creator of the world? For, "is any thing too hard for the Lord?" Nor is there the least reason to doubt of his good will to save. And yet, how many are distressed with fear on this account? There are few who say—"If thou *canst* do any thing, help us!" But there are many who cry—"Lord, if thou *wilt*, thou canst make me clean." Happy the soul that comes thus far. Jesus will answer, as he did of old—"I will. Be thou clean." This assurance he gives us in many parts of the scripture, but in none so fully as in the text. Our Lord is here speaking to a multitude of the Jews, who having seen the miracle of feeding five thousand people with five loaves, followed him a great way, in hope of seeing such another miracle, and perhaps of living upon his bounty. But he exhorts them to seek the bread of life for their souls; laments their

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unbelief; but comforts himself in this, that all who were given to him by the Father should certainly come to him; and declares his perfect readiness to receive every coming soul. This, my friends, is indeed good news; glad tidings of great joy to those of you who are seeking salvation, and who know that it is to be had only in Jesus; especially if your fearful hearts have been tempted to think he will not receive you. Be no longer faithless, but believing; he says, that if you come, he will in no wise cast you out—he will on no account whatever reject or refuse you, but readily embrace you in the arms of his mercy, and give you pardon, peace, holiness, and heaven. Now, that we may clearly understand this, and get the full comfort of it, let us consider,

I. What is meant by *coming to Christ*; and,

II. The encouragement held out in the text to all comers.

I. What is meant by *coming to Christ*. None can suppose it is coming to him with our bodies. This is now impossible; for the heavens have received him out of our sight; and though his divine presence is every where, his glorified body is only in heaven. And were he on earth, as he once was, coming to him with our bodies only would be of no use, as appears from this chapter, ver. 36. where he says to the people who were round about him—"Ye also have seen me, and believe not." Nor is it merely coming to his house, where he is preached; nor to his table, where he is set forth. Many do all this, who are none the nearer to Christ. Ezek. xxxiii. 31. But this coming is to be understood spiritually; it is the coming of the heart; it is the motion of the mind; it is "the flight of the soul to Christ." It is therefore much the same as *believing in Christ*; see ver. 35. "And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that *cometh to me* shall never hunger; and he that *believeth on me* shall never thirst; the same person is intended, and the same act of the mind.

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But you will observe, that such a comer to Christ is convinced of his sin and danger, and comes to Christ for help; just as it is said by the prophet Isaiah (xxvii. 13.), "The great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish." No man will go and beg for bread till he is pinched with want. The prodigal son never said, "I will arise and go to my father," till he was ready to perish with hunger. It is a sense of sin and a fear of hell, together with a hope of mercy, that puts a man upon coming to Christ; for so he himself declares, when speaking to the Jews, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." *Life*, you see, is what a sinner must come for; the life of his soul, for he now sees that he is exposed by sin to eternal death. Now, "all that a man hath, will he give for his life." When this is in danger, he will be in earnest; he will be in haste; and the language of the coming sinner is—"What shall I do to be safe?"—"Lord save, or I perish!"

This coming of the soul to Christ supposes faith. No man can come to him till he has heard of him; and no man can hear of him but by the gospel. Now the gospel means good news; glad tidings. The gospel tells us that "Jesus Christ is come into the world to save sinners;" that "he is come to seek and to save that which is lost;" that his blood cleanse from all sin." The gospel also calls and invites poor sinners to apply to Jesus, that they may have life. For instance, Jesus says, Matt. xi. 28. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Now the sinner hears these gracious words. The Holy Spirit gives him light to understand them. He mixes faith with them. He believes them to be true. Now he cannot believe these things without being affected with them; without having a desire to be interested in them. If he is persuaded of the freeness, fulness, and suitableness of the salvation that is in Christ, his thoughts must and will be much engaged about

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about it; his affections will be moved; in other words, he comes to Christ, his mind flies to him for refuge, and there it rests.

Now this application of the soul to Jesus has a respect to the various offices and characters which he sustains for our salvation. For instance, Is he called a *Saviour*; that is, a deliverer? the soul desires and hopes for deliverance from sin and hell by him alone. Is he a *Prophet*? the soul, sensible of its woful ignorance, comes to him, with a humble, teachable spirit, to be taught and made wise to salvation. Is he a *Physician*? the convinced sinner, sick to death of sin, eagerly applies to him for health and cure. Is he a *Priest*? the sinner, longing for pardoning mercy, depends alone upon the merit of his sacrifice. Is he a *King*? the soul, heartily weary of Satan's tyranny, willingly submits to his mild government, and relies on his heavenly protection. In a word, he "receives Christ Jesus the Lord," as offered to him in the gospel.

Here let us stop a moment, and put a question. We have been told what believing is; what coming to Christ is; now, my friends, the question is, *Do we thus come to Christ?* He that cometh shall be saved; but he that cometh not, shall not be saved. O let us not neglect this great concern! "How shall we escape if we neglect this great salvation? Think of a dying hour. Think of the judgment day. And O! how dreadful would it be if Christ should say to any one of us—"Wretched creature, ruined sinner, your destruction lies at your own door! You were told of your danger; you were invited to believe in me; you were assured, that if you came to me, I would save you; but you refused; you would not come to me, that you might have life. Perish therefore. Perish without pity. Perish without remedy!" God forbid that we should hear such dreadful words! rather let us, one and all, this very moment, fly, in the wishes and desires

desires of our hearts, to this compassionate Friend of sinners.

But perhaps there are some here who earnestly desire to be saved, yet their hearts are full of fear, lest they should be rejected. They have such a sight of the greatness of their sins—of their ignorance—of their unworthiness—of the wickedness of their hearts, that they are afraid to come, lest the Lord should cast them out.

This is a very common case. You must not think that scarcely any one feels and fears as you do. Were you to talk with serious persons in general, you would find that almost all of them, especially at first, have had the very same fears, and have been so much distressed at times, that they were almost in despair. Jesus Christ knew beforehand that it would be thus; and he therefore graciously spoke these kind encouraging words, on purpose to comfort poor, doubting, trembling, coming sinners—"Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." That we may take the comfort of these precious words, let us,

II. Consider the encouragement held out in the text to *all comers*: I say, to *all comers*—"him that cometh;" let him be who he may: high or low; rich or poor; young or old; learned or ignorant; yea, even great sinners; the chief of sinners: all who come shall be welcome. Great sinners need great encouragement; and here they have it. What words could have been spoken more comfortable to the distressed sinner? Many are afraid that there is something *peculiar* in their case; something, on account of which, they shall certainly be cast out: but our gracious Lord, who well knew what timid creatures his people are, has provided in these words an effectual antidote to their fears. This word *Him*, takes in all sorts of persons, in all ages and places; all sorts of sinners, even the greatest: it includes liars, drunkards, harlots, thieves, murderers, and all other kinds and degrees of sinners,

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whomsoever. If any doubt of the truth of this, let them turn to the following texts: Isa. i. 18. Matt. xii. 31. Matt. xxi. 31. Mark, xvi. 15, 16. Acts, xiii. 39. Only let them come, they shall be received; no difficulties made; no objections started: whatever they have been, whatever they have done, they shall not be cast out. Nay, more. Jesus says—"I will in no wise cast him out." I will not by any means, or on any account whatsoever, let it be what it may, cast him out; though he may deserve it: though he may dread it; let him take my word for it, I will receive and embrace him; I will show him all the mercy he needs, for pardon, peace, and holiness: I will save him for ever. Such is the import of these most gracious words. And this might be enough; were it not that sinners, who are coming to Christ, are commonly fruitful in fears and objections, and can scarcely be persuaded of this truth: it seems too great and too good to be true, at least, as applied to them, who see their unworthiness and feel their guilt. For the greater satisfaction, then, of such trembling souls, let us attend to a few considerations, from which it will appear that Jesus Christ will heartily welcome every coming sinner.

1. Consider the gracious nature, the kind disposition of Christ towards sinners. "God is love." Jesus is love incarnate. He is the God of love in human nature. "His heart is made of tenderness; his bowels melt with love." We are to remember that he is the brother of our nature. Because we are flesh and blood, he became such, that he might be a merciful high priest, and, through death, abolish death. Heb. ii. 14, 17. "Ye know the grace of the Lord Jesus, how that, though he was rich, he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich." Had he not loved sinners, he had never forsaken the throne of heavenly glory; condescended to be born of a poor virgin; to be laid in a manger; to be always a man of sorrows, labours, and sufferings; to endure the con-

contradiction of sinners against himself; and, after all, to be betrayed, falsely accused, scourged, smitten, spit upon, crowned with thorns, and nailed to a cross. Who, that considers this, can doubt whether Jesus loves sinners?

The names of Christ, both in the Old and New Testament, point out his gracious nature. Simeon waited for *the Consolation of Israel*. Now if Jesus had not a gracious heart, his appearance in the world would have been no consolation to sinful men. The prophet Isaiah says, "He shall feed his flock like a *Shepherd*: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." Jesus is this good and gracious shepherd, who even laid down his life for the sheep; who feeds them in his pleasant pastures, and guards them with his almighty hand. He is the tender and skilful *Physician*, who heals sick, disordered, and dying souls; who never refuses a patient, nor fails in the most desperate case. He is the *Good Samaritan*, who pities and helps the wounded and dying traveller, neglected and forsaken of men. He is the *Husband* of his church, a name that implies tender care and kind affection; and whose love is the pattern for mortals to imitate. In short, he is, as his enemies reproachfully said, *the Friend of sinners*; not of sin, as they pretended, but that best of friends, who "delivers us from our sins."

2. Consider *the office of Christ*, as another argument to prove his readiness to receive a coming sinner. Jesus Christ, as touching his god-head, is equal with the Father; but he condescended to become a servant for our salvation. As such, he often speaks of being "sent;" and of doing, "not his own will, but the will of his Father." And what is the will of the Father, think you? "This," said Jesus, "is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing; but that every

COMING SINNERS WELCOME TO CHRIST.

every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life." John, vi. 39, 40. Jesus Christ is "the Apostle and High Priest of our profession." The high priest was an officer of the Jewish church, whose business it was to offer gifts and sacrifices; it was necessary for him to be tender-hearted to the ignorant, and those who were out of the way, and to be faithful to God and man. Thus Jesus, our great High Priest, is compassionate; "is touched with the feeling of our infirmities; was tempted in all points like as we are; and, being made perfect through sufferings, became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." Heb. iv. and v. Now it is the office and business of Jesus Christ to save sinners. The high priest of old had nothing to do but with sinners. It was an office on purpose for sinners: and this was the only errand of Christ to our world. He came "not to condemn the world;" he declined any thing of that sort; as you may remember respecting the woman taken in adultery, he would not condemn her, John, viii.; he abhorred her sin, but it was not his office to condemn; he came only to save. And as to proud self-righteous people, he had nothing to do with them; for "he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Look then upon Jesus as a public officer, appointed by Divine authority, to dispense mercy and pardon to every coming sinner, to every one who comes to God for mercy through him. As it is the duty of a judge to dispense the laws, and do justice between man and man; or as it is the duty of the physician of an hospital to take care of all the sick who are in it, so it is the gracious office of the Lord Jesus to dispense mercy, pardon, grace, life, and salvation to all who apply to him: and were it possible, we speak it with the deepest reverence, were it possible, which it is not, that the blessed Jesus should refuse and reject one sinner who comes to him for life, he would be unfaithful; but this can never be,

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we have his word for it in the text, "I will in no wise cast out him that cometh."

3. Consider, once more, the gracious conduct and behaviour of our Saviour when he was upon earth. "He went about doing good." And who were the objects of his regard? Were they the princes and rulers, the rich and prosperous, the wise and learned? No. These, in general, despised and rejected him. He turned his attention to the poor and needy, the sick and miserable; yea, to publicans and harlots, that he might reclaim and save them. This was his reproach—"a friend of sinners." Did he see a multitude of ignorant people following him for instruction? How did he exert himself in teaching them; in houses, in synagogues, in the temple, in a ship, on a mountain! How plainly, how sweetly, how forcibly did he lead them into divine knowledge! Nor did he forget their bodies. Were they hungry, and ready to faint? he had compassion on them, and worked miracles to supply them with food. See also what vast numbers of diseased persons apply to him; the blind; the deaf; the dumb; the diseased with fever, leprosy, palsy; and others possessed with the devil: he heals them all. You never read of one poor, sick, miserable creature that he rejected; if they came, they were welcome; he never sent them away disappointed; and do you think he will show less pity to the sorrows of the mind, to the diseases of the soul? Surely not; for the salvation of one soul is of more consequence than all the thousands of bodily cures he wrought upon earth. Every man and woman that Christ healed, died at last; but he whom Jesus saves "shall never die, but have everlasting life." And yet this, great as it is, is as easy to him as to say to a leper, Be thou clean. Come but to him, fellow-sinner, and he will directly say, Be thou saved.

Remember too, what a kind attention Jesus paid to mourning sinners. Remember the penitent harlot in
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the Pharisee's house; she came behind him, and washed his feet with penitential tears; she was despised by the Pharisee because she had been a great sinner, but Christ speaks kindly to her, and says, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." Remember what he said to another great sinner, the Samaritan woman at the well of Sychar—"If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that speaketh to thee, thou wouldest have asked, and he would have given thee, living water"—if you knew the worth of salvation, and would ask it of Christ, you should have it; and he says the very same to us: "If you knew the value of my salvation, felt your need of it, and would apply to me for it, you should not be denied. John, iv. Remember, my friends, how Jesus mourned and wept when hardened sinners were about to perish in their unbelief; remember how he wept to think of Jerusalem's approaching destruction. Remember too, how he rejoiced at the prospect of a sinner's salvation: though he was a man of sorrows, this filled him with joy; and can you doubt, after all this, whether Jesus will receive you or not? O, be not faithless, but believing. Stagger not at this precious promise through unbelief; but be strong in faith, glorifying God.

APPLICATION.

From what has been said, we may learn what an important thing it is to come to Christ. We are all, by nature, at a dreadful distance; and "they that are far from him," if they die so, "must perish." This then is the first and chief thing in religion, to come to Christ; that is, so to believe the gospel, as to apply in heart and mind to him for salvation. It is not enough to come to church, or come to meeting, or come to sacrament; all is in vain, if we do not come to Christ: for salvation is to be had of none but Christ, and not of him neither without coming for it.

Come

Come then, you who never came before. You shall have heaven if you come; hell must be your portion if you do not come. Pray to God to draw you. "Draw me," says the church, "we will run after thee. Come quickly. You may be less disposed to come to-morrow; yea, to-morrow itself may never come to you. Consider the encouragement that these words of Christ afford. "Come to me," said Jesus, "for I am meek and lowly of heart." You need not be afraid to come, for he says, and you may believe him, "he will in no wise cast you out." Make no excuses. Say not, I am ignorant. Come to him, and he will teach you. Say not, I have a hard heart. Come to him, and he will soften it. Say not, I have a corrupt heart. Come to him, and he will sanctify it. Say not, I am a great sinner—this is the very reason why you should come. "This man receiveth sinners," he came on purpose to save them, and bids you come, that he may save you. Think not foolishly, first to mend yourselves, and then come to him; you will never be better till you do come.

Come needy, come guilty, come loathsome, and bare; You can't come too filthy; come just as you are.

And you who have come—adore the grace that inclined you to come; that made you willing in the day of God's gracious power, and that made you welcome in the day of his mercy.

"Twas the same love that spread the feast,
That sweetly forc'd us in;
Else we had still refus'd to taste,
And perish'd in our sin."

What hath God wrought! Is it not good to draw near to God? Have you not tasted that the Lord is gracious? "God hath strewed all the way from the gate of hell where thou wast, to the gate of heaven whither

12 COMING SINNERS WELCOME TO CHRIST.

whither thou art going, with flowers out of his own garden. Behold how the promises, invitations, calls, and encouragements of the gospel lie round about thee." O keep near to thy Saviour; there is safety, there is peace.

This last affords to every believer a sure mark of his election. Do you sometimes fear whether your name is written in heaven; whether you are among his elect? Behold the certain proof. "All that the Father hath given to me shall come to me." Have you come to Christ? Well then, this is the proof of your being one of those who were given to him. Thus make "your calling and election sure;" your election, by your calling.

Finally, let those who have come to Christ by faith, rejoice to think, that in the heavenly world they shall come to him in a superior manner. "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face:" Faith shall be changed into sight, and hope into possession. So shall we be for ever with the Lord.

"Come, weary souls with sin distress'd,
Come, and accept the promisd rest;
The Saviour's gracious call obey,
And cast your gloomy fears away.

"Oppress'd with guilt, a painful load,
O come and spread your woes abroad;
Divine compassion, mighty love,
Will all the painful load remove.

"Lord, we accept with thankful heart,
The hope thy gracious words impart;
We come with trembling, yet rejoice,
And bless the kind inviting voice."

6 JU 62

THE VAIN EXCUSES OF SINNERS EXPOSED.



S E R M O N,

LUKE xiv. 18.

And they all, with one consent, began to make excuse.

THE blessings of the gospel of Christ are in the parable, of which the text is a part, fitly compared to the dainties of a noble and costly feast. *A certain man made a great supper, and bade many, ver. 16.* So Christ has made plentiful provision in his gospel for the souls of men, and freely invites all who hear it to be partakers. *And he sent his servants at supper-time, to say to them that were bidden, come, for all things are now ready, ver. 17.* So Christ, having called the Jews by his own ministry, sent the apostles after his resurrection to renew the invitation, and to say that the work of redemption was finished, and that he was willing to receive all who should come by faith to him; and this is the language of the gospel wherever it is preached.

If we consider the nature of a feast, we shall see how properly our Saviour compares the blessings of salvation to it. In a feast we expect *wholesome provision—plenty—variety—elegance—company*, and the whole *gratis*. All these, and more, Jesus gives us in his

SERM. XXI. W gospel,

gospel. Here is *"the bread of life"* which came down from heaven; without which we must for ever perish; but eating which, secures our eternal life. Here is *plenty*, for in our father's house there is bread enough and to spare; and however many the guests who come, still "there is room." Here is *variety*; pardon, peace, holiness, adoption, joy in the Holy Ghost, communion with God, perseverance to the end, and glory to crown the whole. Here is *elegance*; dainties worthy a God to bestow; dainties fetched from heaven; dainties purchased at a cost beyond the value of a thousand worlds—for "Christ's flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed!" Here is *good company*; for, sitting down at the gospel feast, "we come to an innumerable company of angels," to the general assembly and church of the first born; and to God the Judge of all; and to the spirits of just men made perfect; and to Jesus." And, what is best of all, it is *gratis*—"without money and without price"—"the poorer the wretch, the welcomer here."

Now, if these great and glorious blessings are considered, how necessary, how free, how precious and delightful, one would naturally suppose that every man to whom the gospel offers them, would as readily and joyfully receive them, as they usually accept an invitation to a plentiful and agreeable entertainment. But, alas, it is not so! If we examine the word, or look into the world, we shall find it quite otherwise.—*They all with one consent begin to make excuse*; for all men, till changed by the grace of God, are blind, and lame, and deaf, and dead, as to all spiritual things; seduced by the Devil's lies, and in love with the world, they vainly strive "to fill their belly with the husks of swine," but have no more relish for salvation, than a sick man for wholesome food; yea, like him, "their soul loatheth dainty meat."

Yet

Yet amidst this awful depravity, to the honour of scripture and the truths of God, men are ashamed to give a direct refusal: conscience admits the value of the gospel, and therefore to make their neglect of it appear justifiable, they have recourse to various excuses, with which they strive to satisfy themselves and their neighbours, and vainly hope to satisfy God. To describe these excuses, and to answer them; to shew what they are, and the folly of them, is the business which, with the Lord's assistance, I shall now attempt; and O that the Spirit of our God may succeed what shall be said to the conviction of these excuses, and sweeping away all their "refuges of lies."

We shall first notice the three excuses which follow our text; and then proceed to mention other excuses and objections which are often made.

1. *The first said—I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused.*

This is the plea of a rich man, who had been adding field to field. He was under no kind of necessity to view the land he had bought: probably he had seen it before he bought it; if not, he might have staid till another day, and have found the field in the same condition; but he wanted to feast his eyes upon his new purchase. See here an instance of the inordinate love of the world, the pride of possession, the deceitfulness of riches. This was "a man of the world, whose portion was in this life," for the sake of which he was deaf to the call of Christ. O how hardly shall they who are rich enter into the kingdom of heaven! so great is the danger of loving the world too much.

2. *And another said—I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused.* Here is the man of business: the former was

W 2 taken

EXCUSES OF SINNERS EXPOSED.

taken up with pleasure; this with care. "Too much leisure, or too much business are equally dangerous to the soul." This was a frivolous excuse, like the former; another day would have done as well for proving the oxen in the plough; for the purchase was already made; but anxiety for the world prevailed over his spiritual interest. And what is this but the common excuse of tradesmen, labourers, and women who have families? *I have no time to spare for religion.* Let me ask you, What is your time for? Is not the care of the soul *the one thing needful*? Should you not seek *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness? Besides, "what will it profit, if you gain the whole world, and lose your own soul." And let me tell you, there is time enough to mind the affairs of both worlds; and both are best minded together: the one need not shut out the other. Religion will not make men idle; it will make an idle man industrious; it tends even to worldly prosperity. "Godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of this life, and of that which is to come."

How can any man say he has no time for religion, when the Sabbath-day is appointed for that very purpose; yet that holy day is profaned by many, by business, idleness, or taking pleasure. There are fifty-two days in every year which ought to be wholly employed in public or private duties of religion. What account will they give to God of their time, who have squandered away their precious hours in sin and folly, and who have turned their backs on the means of grace, which might have made them wise to salvation?

Permit me also to observe, that some who cannot find time to serve God, can find time to sin; they can find time to curse and swear, to talk and sing obscenely,

obscenely, to be drunken, and to be wanton. Yea, some of these people complain of too much time; and therefore they invent amusements to *kill time*. O, if the hours that some consume at the ale-house, the fairs and merry meetings, were spent in hearing and reading the word of God, in prayer, and singing his praises, to how much better account would they turn out!

3. The excuse of a third person was, *I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come*. Here is an excuse of another kind, which takes in too great a regard to creatures, to much fondness for domestic enjoyments, and the pleasures of this life. It was a very weak excuse; for though he had married a wife, he might surely have left her for a few hours, without a breach of proper affection; or he might have taken her with him to such a great feast as this, where so many were bidden, and none forbidden; or he might have gone alone, if he could not persuade her to go with him. How many perish by the unlawful use of lawful things, and undue regard to carnal relations! Husbands and wives, who ought to help each other in the great concerns of salvation, are often deadly hindrances; and will reproach each other to all eternity for being such. Thus Adam ruined himself and all his posterity by carnal fondness, and loving the creature more than the Creator. Let married persons be on their guard; and remember that not only houses and lands, but wives too, must sometimes be forsaken, rather than for their sakes we should forsake Christ.

All these excuses were, as you see, frivolous and foolish; they were all of a worldly kind; and indeed it is *the world*, in some form or other, that proves the great hindrance of men's salvation. But there are many other excuses which people are apt to make,

make, equally absurd. I shall proceed to notice some of them.

4. Religion, says one, is a hard and difficult thing; hard to understand, and difficult to practise. I answer, Is it necessary? Christ says, it is the one thing necessary. It is just as necessary as salvation is. And do you object to every thing necessary, because it is difficult? Do not you find hardships in your trade or business? and yet you pursue it. Consider also it will be much harder to bear the torments of hell, than to practise the duties of religion. A person who wanted one of the martyrs to recant, said, "Life is sweet, and death is bitter." "True," said he, but eternal life is sweeter, and eternal death is more bitter." Will not heaven make amends for all our pains and labours? Do you think there is a saint in heaven that repents of what he did or suffered for Christ? but, in fact, true religion is not so difficult as you may imagine: the path is so plain, that "the way-faring man, though a fool, shall not err therein;" And Jesus says, "Take my yoke upon you, for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light;" his commands are not grievous, and grace makes them pleasant. Religion is far from being a gloomy business. "Wisdom's ways are pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Can it make a man unhappy to love God and be loved by him? Is it a gloomy thing to be at peace with God, to know that our sins are pardoned, and to have the earnest of glory? there are joys in religion far beyond any that the world can pretend to, and such as wicked men would be glad to possess when they come to lie on a dying bed: then is the value of true religion known, when the world can afford no further help.

5. Some object, and say, Your religious people are hypocrites; after all their pretences, they are like other folks.

folks. I answer by a question—Are they *all* hypocrites? If so, then there is no such thing as religion in the world; if so, the Bible is all a lye, and Christ must have shed his blood in vain; for he died to redeem us from the world, and our vain conversation in it, and to make us a holy people, zealous of good works. It is admitted there are some hypocrites; and woe be to them. There was a hypocrite, a Judas, even among the apostles; but religion did not cease because of him. If there was not a reality and an excellency in religion, there would be no hypocrites; if guineas and bank-notes were not valuable, there would be no counterfeits; and, I presume, you do not refuse to take any money, because there is base coin; nor would you excuse yourself from paying your rent to your landlord, because you are afraid of taking bad money. If there are hypocrites, as you say, and we allow, then there is the greater need to look to yourself, that you are sincere; but I greatly doubt the sincerity of those who make this excuse; and their hearts tell them it will not be admitted at the bar of God. Besides, it is censorious and wicked to judge another man, and call him a hypocrite, unless his life is bad; but, because you can find no blemish in the life of a truly religious person, you presume to search his heart, and call him a hypocrite. The truth is, you would be glad to prove him such, as an excuse for your own want of religion.

6. Methinks I hear another person say—*as I feel an occasion to make so much fuss about religion.* You say truly; you do not see: But your not seeing, is a proof of nothing but your own blindness; a blind man sees nothing. If you examine the word of God, you will find the Christian life compared to a Warfare; now a soldier's life, in the time of actual service, is not idle. It is also compared to a Race, in which great

exertion and activity are necessary, if a man would so run as to obtain the prize. A Christian is represented in Scripture as "crucifying the old man of sin," and "mortifying the deeds of the flesh;" and can these things be done by the slothful man, who is a stranger to zeal himself, and hates to see it in another? Has not God required us to love him with all our heart, and all our soul, and all our mind, and all our strength; and do you know any body that does more than this? Let me also ask you, Why it is that you commend industry in worldly business, and despise it in religion? If there be a hell to avoid, and a heaven to obtain, and sin to destroy, and a God to serve, and a soul to save,—why should we not be as earnest in religion as you are in the world? why should not a Christian love God as much as you love money, or sin? I know the answer your heart makes.

7. Another cries—*I shall do as well as my neighbours; and if I perish, God help thousands!* I reply, If you do not better than the thousands that perish, God help you! Jesus Christ has said, "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat;" while the narrow way to life is found and trod by few. Think not well of your state, because you are like others: you have greater cause to suspect it. Christ's flock is small; but the Devil's herd is large. "The whole world," says St. John, "lieth in wickedness." Follow not, then, the multitude to do evil, but consider their end, and be wise. It is a very affecting and useful story that Mr. Baxter relates, in his "Call to the Unconverted?" "I remember," says he, "a circumstance that a gentleman told me he saw upon Acham-bridge, over the Severn, near Shrewsbury. A man was driving a flock of fat lambs, and something meeting them, and hindering their passage,

passage, one of the lambs leaped on the wall of the bridge, and, his legs slipping from under him, he fell into the stream; the rest, seeing him, did one after one, leap over the bridge into the stream, and were all, or almost all, drowned. Those that were behind did little know what was become of them that were gone before, but thought they might venture to follow their companions; but, as soon as ever they were over the wall, and falling headlong, the case was altered. Even so it is with unconverted carnal men. One dieth by them, and drops into hell, and another follows the same way; and yet they will go after them, because they think not whether they are gone. O! but when death hath once opened their eyes, and they see what is on the other side of the wall, even in another world, then what would they give to be where they were?"

8. Another objector says—*But I hope to do better than many, for I am not so bad a sinner as some.* I answer, You are not to be compared with others, but with the law of God, which requires perfect obedience. Now, compared with this, you will be found a sinner; and it is not being a less sinner than another that will save you; but faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose righteousness is "to and upon all that believe in him." Besides, the folly of such an excuse is manifest; for, if finding another man worse than one's self would do, then all sinners might escape except that one, who is worst of all.

9. Perhaps another person will say—*It is true, I am a sinner bad enough; but I do some good things, and will not they atone for my sins?* St. Paul shall answer, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission;" the good works of men were never appointed to the office of a Saviour; for, "if righteousness come by the law, Christ is dead in vain." Why do we call

Jesus

Jesus a *Saviour*, and yet hope to be saved by our works? which is to become our own Saviour. But the word of God has settled this, and declares, Eph. ii. 8. "By grace are we saved, through faith; and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast." And, to say the truth, no man can do works good in the sight of God until he is first justified by faith, for even "the prayer of the wicked is an abomination to him; and the thirteenth Article of the Church of England truly says, that "Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God; and we doubt not but they have the nature of sin."

10. Unwilling to humble himself, and cry for mercy, another says—I am no scholar, and God expects no more than he gives. I answer, You may be a true Christian, and yet no scholar. God has sent you his word, and you can hear it, if you cannot read it: not to say, that since Sunday schools have been set up, every person almost may learn to read if he will. But know this, my friends, that ignorance will excuse none. Where knowledge is a duty, ignorance is a sin. It is not your want of opportunity to know the Gospel, but your want of inclination to it, that keeps you ignorant. You take pains to know how you may get food and raiment, or charity; why then remain contentedly ignorant of the things which belong to your everlasting peace? Isa. xxvii. 11. 2 Thess. i. 8.

11. Another person, advanced in years, says—I am too old to change my religion. What do you call religion? Is it a set of notions and ceremonies? Is it an attachment to certain ministers and buildings? This is not religion. Religion is the devotedness of the heart to God; and without this the most pompous forms are

of no avail. Nicodemus was an old man when he came to Christ, who said to him, as we say to you, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." In a word, if your religion has not changed you, it is high time to change your religion.

12. Methinks I hear another say—I intend to be better at some future time. So did Felix, who trembled when Paul preached, and said to him, "When I have a convenient season, I will call for thee;" but that season never came. Hell is paved with good intentions. Should you die in your sins, which God forbid! out of your own mouth will you be condemned; for you are forced to admit that all is not right; and yet you venture to go on in sin, though you know not what a day may bring forth. Go to the sick and dying bed of a neighbour, hear him groan, and complain of an aching head and a sick stomach; observe his shaking hand and disordered pulse; the rattling throat, the convulsed limbs, and the cold sweat; and say, is this a time for repentance? Are these poor dregs of life all that you should offer to God? O be wiser; nor leave the service of God, or the salvation of your soul, to so improper a season.

But, after all, the true reason remains untold. May not all your excuses be summed up in this one?—*I love sin, and cannot part with it*; but observe, you must part with sin, or part with heaven. You must turn or burn. And are you content to enjoy the present pleasures of sin for a moment, and endure everlasting pains, which are their certain consequence? I have read of a man who, by his excesses, was in danger of losing his sight; and being told by the physician, that he must change his course or lose his sight, replied, "Then farewell dear sight!" Thus many by persistence in sin, seem to say—Farewell, God

God of mercy, Saviour of sinners, Spirit of holiness! farewell ye people of God! farewell life and happiness, heaven, and glory! and, for the sake of dear sin, welcome devils, welcome darkness, despair and misery for ever more!

APPLICATION.

Thus, first, we have taken notice of some of those excuses which sinners often make, who love darkness rather than light; who follow lying vanities, and forsake their own mercies. But it is plain that all these excuses arise from the darkness, worldliness, and enmity of our fallen nature, and they shew the necessity of having "a new heart and a right spirit." These excuses will scarcely now satisfy those who make them; they will miserably fail them in the prospect of death; and they cannot be accepted at the bar of God. In the parable before us, it is said that "when the servant shewed his Lord these things, *he was angry*, and said, none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper." God forbid this sentence should go forth against any person here. As yet, our gracious Lord commands us to "go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that his house may be filled. In his name we come, and call you to the Gospel-feast. Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade you; and knowing the bounty of the Lord, we invite you. None ever repented of coming; nor were any rejected who came. Come then to Jesus. "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst Come; and whoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."

"All things are ready, I come away,

Not weak excuses frame;

Crowd to your places at the feast,

And bless the Founder's name!"

EXCISE OF SINKERS EXPOSED

Christ the Bread of Life, and the
Nature of Faith in him.



S E R M O N

ON

JOHN vi. 27.

*Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that
meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the
Son of Man shall give unto you.*

WHEN our Saviour had fed five thousand
people with five loaves and two fishes, they
were so struck with the miracle, that they deter-
mined to proclaim him for their king—the Messiah.
But he refused their offer, and got out of their way.
They followed him next day to a great distance; but
our Lord, who knew their hearts, told them plainly
that they acted from a corrupt principle in following
him, ver. 26. *Jesus said, Verily, verily, I say unto
you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but
because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.* There
may be a great show of zeal in running after prayers
and preaching, without a spark of grace. Few per-
sons seek Christ for his own sake, or for spiritual
blessings only. Many follow him for loaves, not for
love. Let us beware of hypocrisy. These people
had come many miles in hopes of another miracle;
all their labour in coming so far was for bread. Now
Christ shows them a more excellent way; he puts
SERM. XXI. them

them upon a better plan: he bids them be more moderate in their worldly pursuits, and more diligent in their heavenly pursuits. But when he says, *Labour not for the meat which perisheth*, you cannot suppose that he forbids men to labour in an honest way to get their daily bread. No; for God has laid that burden on all the children of Adam: *In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread*; and, *He that will not work, neither let him eat*. But we are to understand it comparatively, Labour not for worldly bread in the first and chief place; it must not be our principal care and concern; and for this good reason—it perisheth; not only our necessary food, but the wealth, honour, and pleasure of the world, which men hunger for, like meat, perisheth; they perish in the using, and they who use them must soon perish in the grave. This shews the folly of being too eager in the pursuit of them; and at the same time should put us upon the greatest diligence in seeking for the food of our immortal souls, even Christ himself, who is the bread of life, as he largely shews in this chapter. Now, to help you in doing this, we shall,

I. Consider Jesus Christ under the emblem of *Food*; and,

II. Enquire into the nature of that LABOUR which is here recommended, in order to obtain it.

I. Let us consider Jesus Christ under the emblem of *Food*. As we cannot understand any thing that is *spiritual*, but as it is compared to something that is *natural*, God is pleased in his word to use many *similitudes*, whereby to set forth the excellencies of the Lord Jesus Christ, and recommend him to us. Hence he is called a *Sun*, to signify Light; a *Rock*, to signify Support; a *Refuge*, to signify Safety; and here he compares himself to *Food*. And this way of teaching, not only helps us to understand spiritual things, but

but it serves to put us in mind of them; so that when we see the sun, it may remind us of Christ our light; and when we take our meat, it may put us in mind of Jesus, the meat which endureth to eternal life. This is a part of that spiritual mindedness, which to enjoy, is life and peace. A few particulars will convince you how properly Christ is compared to food.

1. Because Christ is as necessary to the life of the soul as meat is to the support of the body. You know God has so formed our bodies, that we cannot live long without food. Christ is no less necessary for the soul; so it is written in this chapter, ver. 33. *For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life to the world;* and again, ver. 35. *I am the bread of life;* and ver. 51. *If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever.* The same is asserted again and again throughout the chapter; the whole of which you will do well to read when you go home.

2. All kinds of food are the gift of God; no man in the world can make any thing eatable. Man can plant, and sow, and rear cattle; he can also cook his food with endless variety, when he has got the materials; but he can make none of them. No man can give life to a plant, or to a beast. Every thing we eat is the gift of a good God. Just so, Christ, the bread of life, is the gift of God. "God gave his Son." "Blessed be God for his unspeakable gift!" The manna that God sent down to feed Israel in the Wilderness, was a lively type of Jesus; *for the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven,* ver. 33.

3. Most kinds of food are prepared for our use by fire. So Christ, as our sacrifice, endured, in the garden and on the cross, the dreadful wrath of God, as "a consuming fire." This was set forth in a

CHRIST THE BREAD OF LIFE, &c.

lively manner by the sacrifices of old, which were burnt on the altar, which represented that Christ was to be consumed by the flames of his love for his Father and his elect, and at the same time by the flames of the divine wrath against sin, which he had undertaken to bear. But the Paschal-lamb was not wholly consumed; after it was roasted with fire, it was eaten by the ancient believers; the same sacrifice which procured their safety became their food; and thus it is with us, if by faith we feed upon Christ crucified. And this leads to another remark.

4. Food must be actually received, eaten, and digested, in order to support life. It is not hearing of food, nor seeing it, nor smelling it, that will satisfy hunger or nourish the body; nor will merely hearing of Christ, nor attending ordinances, nor partaking of sacraments, nourish the soul unto eternal life. By true faith, every believer receives Christ for himself, depends upon him for his own salvation, and feeds upon him in his heart with thanksgiving. This eating is absolutely necessary to salvation, as Christ declares, ver. 53. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, ye have no life in you.*

5. There is pleasure and delight in the reception of food, if persons are in health; and so there is in feeding upon Christ by faith. But then there must be spiritual health and appetite. The disordered stomach of a sick man "loatheth dainty meat;" and there are those who abhor the doctrine of salvation by Christ: but the man who is alive to God; who hungers and thirsts after righteousness, finds sweet and heavenly delight in partaking of Christ and his benefits. His love, his grace, his blood, his righteousness, his intercession, his glory, are sweeter to the taste than honey to the palate. He sits down to the

the gospel-table, and finds there a feast of fat things full of marrow, and can say with the spouse in the Canticles, "I sat under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste."

I. We may remark that, when Christ is compared to food, it intimates the constancy with which believers must make use of him. Many of the businesses and pleasures of life are occasional only; but we cannot live without "daily bread." Just so it is that "the life we live in the flesh, must be by the faith of the Son of God." "The just shall live by his faith;" and he who has once "tasted that the Lord Jesus is gracious," will say, "evermore give me this bread."

II. We now proceed to enquire into the nature of that labour which Christ recommends in the text; for he not only directed the people to moderate their worldly pursuits, saying, "Labour not for the meat that perisheth," but he directed them to employ themselves diligently in the pursuit of heavenly things; as if he had said, "Labour for the meat which endureth unto eternal life." But we are not to suppose that any sort of labour is intended by which a sinner can merit eternal life, or that any diligence in religion will make a man worthy of Christ, or the mercy of God through him. This is a common and very dangerous mistake; but this would be to subvert the whole gospel, which teaches us that "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but by his grace are we saved, through faith;" which faith itself is "the gift of God." The Lord will beat down all human pride, and glorying in self. He alone must be exalted in our salvation. And it is evident, from the latter part of the text, that merit is entirely out of the question; for, of this bread of life it is said, *which the Son of Man shall give you.*

re If that it be *given*, the labour required cannot be
 y in order to merit or purchase it. *And he said to the Jews*
 : 3000 The nature of this labour may be learned from
 the following verses: the people asked our Lord
 what it was. *What shall we do that we may work the*
 works of God? They wanted to know whether he re-
 quired any other works than Moses did: they thought
 something very great was necessary, which they called
 the works of God; and they seemed to think
 that by some of their good deeds they might merit
 at this bread. Now observe Christ's plain answer.
 This is the work of God, that he believe on him whom
 he hath sent. This is the great duty which is ne-
 cessary to the acceptance of your persons and your
 works; this is what God commands, approves, and
 is the Author of; namely, that ye receive me, and
 rest your souls on me for salvation, as I am appointed of
 the Father for that purpose, and plainly authorized
 and approved by the miracles I have wrought. *But*
 Faith, then, is the work intended. Believing in
 Christ is that labour which he recommends to us, in
 order to our living upon this heavenly food. You
 will ask—What is faith? I answer, in the words of
 the late Rev. Mr. Romaine: Faith signifies the
 believing the word of God. It relates to some word
 spoken, or to some promise made by him, and it ex-
 presses the belief which a person who hears it has of
 its being true. He assents to it, relies upon it, and
 acts accordingly. This is faith. We are to be-
 lieve all that the word of God declares, but faith, as
 connected with salvation, chiefly relates to the di-
 vine testimony, or record of God, concerning Jesus
 Christ. All faith relates to some testimony, human
 or divine. Now, faith St. John, if we receive the wit-
 ness (or testimony) of men, the witness (or testimony)
 of God is greater. For this is the witness (or testimony)
 which

which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on
 the Son of God hath the witness; that is, the testimony
 of Christ in himself, in his own mind or conscience:
 he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, be-
 cause he believeth not the record that God gave of his
 Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us
 eternal life; and this life is in his Son. 1 John v. 9-11.
 The Holy Spirit enlightens the mind into the true
 meaning of this blessed testimony; and the believer
 is persuaded of its truth, excellence, and everlasting
 importance. He assents to it as true. He delights
 in it as good, and rests his eternal all on this founda-
 tion, expecting that God, who is faithful to his pro-
 mise, will not suffer him to perish, but give him
 eternal life. On, as the renowned Witius expresses
 it, "As faith is an assent given to the divine truth,
 it includes in it the acceptance of the benefit offered
 by the covenant of grace." Here is my Son, says
 God, and salvation in him: I offer him to whoever
 desires him, and believes that he shall find his salva-
 tion in him. Who desires him? Who believes this?
 I do, says the believer; I greatly long for him: I
 believe my salvation to be laid up in him: I take
 him as thus offered to me. Be it so, saith the Lord.
 Perhaps you will now ask me, But why is this
 called labour? Is there any difficulty in all this?
 Yes: much every way: for
 1. Believing in Christ alone for salvation, is quite
 foreign to the notions of men by nature, and quite
 contrary to the terms of the covenant of works,
 which all natural men are under, and to which even
 awakened sinners are much inclined. St. Paul ta-
 nents the state of the Jews, who, being ignorant of
 God's righteousness, and going about to establish
 (their own righteousness, would not submit themselves
 (to the righteousness of God." They sought righte-
 ousness

ourselves by their works, for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone." Rom. ix. and x. Now it is one of the hardest things in the world to bring off all moral devout man from a dependence on his good works, to trust his salvation on Christ alone; therefore is believing called a labour.

2. There are many other people who think that believing in Christ for salvation is too easy, cheap, and common a thing; they would rather do some hard and difficult task; something that looks great and meritorious; such as building a church or any hospital; giving a great deal to the poor, or wearing sackcloth, or living in a monastery, or going on a pilgrimage. There have been people that have walked with spikes in their shoes, and others who have burnt their children in the fire to appease their gods. But only to believe in Christ seems too simple and easy a thing, and on that very account it is hard to them. Thus we read in the Old Testament of a Syrian general who had the leprosy, and went a long journey to be cured by Elisha the prophet. When this great man came to the door, the prophet sent out a messenger, desiring him to wash in the river Jordan, and he should be healed. This you will say was an easy thing. So it was; but that very circumstance made it hard, for it put the great man in a rage. "I thought," said he, "that he would surely come out to me, and stand, and call upon his God, and strike his hand over the place;" so he went away in a passion. But one of his servants wisely said, "If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? How much rather then, when he saith to thee, wash and be clean." He took the hint, and was perfectly healed. 2 Kings v.

3. Another thing makes believing a labour. Many think that if much stress is laid upon faith, it will make

make people neglect good works, and so be hurtful to the interest of virtue and morality. Some think it is not amiss to talk of Christ and his merits to dying people, because they cannot live to abuse the doctrine; but that little should be preached about free grace and the blood of Christ, lest it should lead to licentiousness. Alas, for such persons! It is evident they are "the whole, who need not the physician." If even they had been convinced of sin and led to fear the wrath of a just and holy God, they would gladly fly to the only refuge for a sinner; and they would know by experience that the gospel is as good a doctrine to live by, as it is to die by. And indeed it is an abominable reproach upon the holy gospel to charge it with so bad a tendency. In fact, we know from the word of God, from experience, and from observation, that faith purifies the heart, works by love, and produces all the fruits of righteousness and goodness.

4. But the great thing that makes believing in Christ so laborious is, the awful view that a convinced sinner often has of his guilt. He sees he has broken the law of God, and is exposed to its dreadful curse. He knows the corruption of his nature, and the plague of his heart. He feels that his heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. He ranks himself among the chief of sinners; thinks there is not another sinner in the world so bad as himself; he fears there is something singular in his case: perhaps he is ready to fear that he has committed the unpardonable sin: he complains that he is beset with blasphemous thoughts: and on all these, and perhaps on many other accounts, is afraid that there is no help for him in God.

Besides, the Devil is very busy with a convinced sinner. He is afraid of losing a subject; and as it

was

was of old with a young man who was coming to Christ for bodily cure, "while he was yet a coming, the Devil threw him down and tare him;" so Satan tries all his skill, and employs all his agents, to keep the soul from Christ; he will oppose nothing so much as his flying to Christ by faith.

Add to these difficulties one more. The convinced and enlightened soul, who is fully persuaded there is no salvation but in Christ, is apt to think it would be presumption in him to go to Christ, as he is so guilty, so filthy, so unworthy. He thinks when he is more reformed, more deeply humbled, and has obtained more knowledge and sanctity, then he may venture to hope in Christ. But this is a great mistake; a hurtful error; it is turning the Gospel upside down. The sinner's first business is to fly to Christ; to believe the record of God concerning him; to believe that his blood cleanseth from all sin; that every coming sinner will be welcome; Christ casting out none that come to him.

These considerations fully shew how properly our blessed Lord speaks in the text, *LABOUR for the meat which endureth to eternal life.* And yet, blessed be God, who is "the Author and Finisher of faith;" he can render this easy to the soul, by the power of his Holy Spirit; for "he worketh in us both to will and to do according to his good pleasure." "Our sufficiency," in this respect, "is of God;" and hard as it may seem at first, it becomes easier as we continue in the school of Christ, and there "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus."

APPLICATION.

1. This subject *reproves* us. So our Lord intended it; so let us receive it. How many among us labour

SERMON XXII.

labour hard! But what for? A morsel of bread. Six long days in a week are spent in toil, to procure a few shillings. All this is right. This is no more than what God requires, "Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work." But is this all? Is there no concern for the soul? Do not think, my dear friend, that labouring for the body will excuse you from "the one thing needful," which is the care of the soul. You must mind both worlds; and both will be best minded when they are minded together. Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things (food and raiment) shall be added to you." Think of the vanity of this world. Remember that earthly things perish in the using; but Christ, the bread of life, endureth for ever; and he that eateth of this bread shall never die.

2. Do you ask, How I shall get faith? I answer, It is the gift of God, and is to be sought for by earnest prayer, and daily attention to the Gospel, the word of faith. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Attend therefore where Christ is preached. Christ's sheep know his voice; they know it from a stranger's voice. May you learn to distinguish; and while you listen to the truth, pray earnestly that the Holy Spirit of truth may enlighten your minds, and enable you to mix faith with it; so shall it profit your souls.

3. We may also learn from this text that many labour in vain, even in religion. They follow after righteousness; they want to be good, and hope to be saved; but they attain not their desires. What is the matter? "They seek it not by faith, but, as it were, by the works of the law," Rom. ix. 31. Avoid this rock, on which so many split; and remember, that the first business in religion is to believe in Jesus.

Begin

A Sinner changed by Grace.

S E R M O N,

P E T E R 3, 4.

The time past of our life may suffice us to have taught the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you.

SIN, that accursed thing Sin, was the occasion of our Saviour's death; and he died, not only to save us from its guilt; that we, who believe, might not be condemned, but to save us also from its power, that it might not have dominion over us. This double benefit of the Redeemer's death was signified by the water and the blood which issued from his pierced side; for St. John, who beheld the awful scene, observes, 1 John v. 6. "This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood." By the *blood*, we are justified from the guilt of sin, and so reconciled to God; by the *water*, our polluted nature is purified. Thus is Jesus a complete Saviour. Both these are equally necessary. And what God has joined together, let no man put asunder; for as they were united in the Redeemer's design, so are they united in the experience of all who believe. When a sinner is awakened, enlightened, and brought to Christ for pardon and life, then he also feels an earnest desire for this second benefit of his death, a deliverance from the rule and power of sin. So St. Peter teaches us in this chapter, v. 1. *Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind; that is, all Christians should be armed with the same mind and resolution against sin and for*
SERM. XXIII. Y holiness,

holiness, as Christ was. But Christ, having suffered in the flesh for sin, lived in the spirit unto God; therefore should we also cease from sin, and live no more to the lust of men, but to the will of God; so sayeth the Apostle in our text, "the time past of your life may suffice." Yes, we have had enough, and too much of sin; it has taken up too much of our time and affection; henceforth may we live to God, how ever strangely it may appear to the world. In these useful words we have the four following things:

- I. The walk of a natural man described.
- II. The great change that grace makes in such a man.
- III. The reasonableness of that change, and,
- IV. The usage which a changed person may expect from the world.

I. The walk of a natural man described. *He walks the will of the Gentiles, and lives in sin.* It is not certain whether St. Peter wrote this epistle to the Jews only, or to Gentiles also; nor is it of any consequence to us; for there is no great difference between a carnal Jew, a carnal Gentile, or a carnal Christian. All unconverted people live according to the will and way of a corrupt nature, and contrary to the will of God. The will of God is the proper rule of our actions; which will is plainly declared in the Bible; but who enquires after this? who says, with converted Saul, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" No natural man says, I do only those who, like Saul, are converted to God. And here is the grand and essential difference between *real Christians* and all other people in the world. The latter walk according to the flesh; the former, according to the Spirit; for, as St. Paul largely shews in the 8th chapter to the Romans, *they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.* And what are all the thoughts, words, desires, pursuits, and delights of carnal men?

about, but something of a fleshly kind: they have no knowledge of, no care for, no delight in any thing that is spiritual, holy, or heavenly; nor can they, while in that state; for as our Lord says, John iii. 6, *That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit.* Till a man then is born again, he works the will of the Gentiles; he walks according to the flesh. The Lord, in his mercy, discover to those who are in this state the danger of it, and deliver them out of it by his changing grace.

Observe in the text, *the readiness* with which men sin, they *run* to it, it is their delight; they do not merely walk, but they run; their feet are swift to do evil, while to every thing good they are dull and slow. Observe also, that men sin *in company*, and encourage each other to sin: "they think it strange that ye run not with them." Adam fell in company, and for the sake of company; and all his children are not only corrupt, but "corrupters"; beware then of "evil communications, which corrupt good manners," and take the wise man's advice, "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." Remark likewise in the text the *constancy* with which men sin; they "wrought the will of the Gentiles"; they worked at sin as a man works at his trade, not occasionally, but daily. Hence sinners are called *workers of iniquity*, and as such, sentenced by Christ the Judge, to eternal misery.

Let us now take notice of the particulars of this wicked course. *Lechtriousness* is first mentioned. This means wantonness expressed in looks, words, and actions. *Lusts*, or criminal desires and pursuits after unlawful embraces. *Excess of wine*; that is immoderate drinking of any strong liquors. *Revelings* and *Banquetings*, feasting with songs and music, including the music of the play-house, and similar diversions, which are Satan's traps to catch unwary souls. *Abominable idolatries*, or the worship of idols,

which is an abominable affront to the only living and true God; and which was generally attended among the heathen with abominable lewdness, drunkenness, and other vices. Those were the practices of the heathen; and are they not also the practices of many called Christians? Is there not in every place some persons who run to this excess of riot? O that such may see the error and danger of their ways, and cry to the Lord for his pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace! and this is next to be considered.

II. *The great change that the grace of God makes in a natural man.*

The change we mean is far more than *merely* the mere reformation of a sinner's life: it is an inward, supernatural change, wrought by the Spirit of God, and by means of the gospel of Christ. So we read, ver. 6. of this chapter, *For this cause was the Gospel preached also to them that are dead*; that is, to those believers who were dead when St. Peter wrote, as well as to those who were then living; that they might be judged according to men in the flesh; that is, that they might judge and condemn themselves for their fleshly lusts, and mortify and subdue their carnal appetites; and so be dead indeed unto sin, but live according to God in the Spirit; that being quickened from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, they might, being helped by the Spirit, be conformed to the will of God, and do those things which are well pleasing in his sight.

It is by the preaching of the gospel that this change is generally effected; for it is the gospel only which is "the power of God to salvation." This is God's mighty instrument for pulling down the strong holds of the Devil; for opening mens eyes, and turning them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith in Christ. Acts xvi. 18.

The sinner is usually first alarmed by the Law, as contained in the ten commandments. If his eyes are opened by the Spirit of God, he sees that the law is spiritual, and reaches to the secret thoughts of his heart; and that having broken the law, he is under its curse. Thus, though before he was "alive without the law," the commandment comes with power to his conscience, sin revives, and he dies; that is, he now sees he is a dead man in law; justly condemned to eternal death on account of his sins.

But the law alone is insufficient to destroy the power of sin. The gospel is the instrument employed by the Holy Spirit for this purpose. Sin never appears to the believer so sinful as when he beholds Christ crucified for it. Jesus Christ, as crucified for sin, was the grand subject of apostolic preaching. The first ministers of Christ determined to know nothing among the people but Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And O, how glorious were the triumphs of the cross! It was this which subdued the hearts of poor, wretched, beastly, devilish men, among the heathen. Those who had wallowed in the filth of sin, and reduced human nature to the most degraded state, became holy, humble, chaste, temperate, honest, pious, gentle, useful men. This it was that changed St. Paul from a bloody persecutor of the saints to a humble disciple and flaming preacher of Christ. So he says, Gal. vi. 14. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." So that every believer may say and sing,

"It was the sight of thy dear cross, O Lord, that
 hath weaned my heart from earthly things,
 And taught me to esteem as dross
 The mirth of fools and pomp of kings."
 And this shows that the very first business of a con-
 vinced sinner, who is hungry and thirsts after righte-
 ousness,

ourself is to come to Christ. We have no strength and ability in ourselves, by nature, to become holy, and subdue our sin; we must begin to live to God in a new way, by faith in Christ. The efforts of a natural man towards holiness are all forced and unnatural; we must have a new nature and new powers, and these we can have only in and from Christ, and by virtue of union to him, through faith. Christ dwells in the hearts of believers, and they dwell in him. They are "members of his body, and are so joined to him as to become one spirit." They are branches of Christ the tree; separate from him they can do nothing; but from union to him proceed all their good works, and sincere acceptable obedience. Thus the soul is brought to cleave to Christ with purpose of heart, to hate every false way, and to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present evil world. This is the great change that grace makes.

III. We proceed to speak of the reasonableness of this change. *The time past* (says our holy apostle) *the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles.* Not as if sin was entitled to any portion of our short and mortal lives. No. A moment given to sin in a moment too much. But it may well be said, *the time past may suffice for* *Sin is a dreadful waste of precious time.* Life is very short, time flies on swift wings; and when once gone, is gone for ever. We can never recall a lost hour. And yet, how is time squandered away! O, visit dying beds, to learn the value of time. What would some dying people give for a few weeks, or a few hours? There have been instances of rich men who have offered physicians half their estates, if they could prolong their lives for a few weeks. And what is "the worm that never dies," but the horrid remorse of a damned sinner, reflecting with

intolerable

intolerable anguish, upon the loss of his time and abuse of his mercies, in a life of sin. *What fruit had ye?* She is also an *useless* thing. *What fruit had ye?* said St. Paul to the converted Romans, *what fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?* What profit, honour, or pleasure, did ye find in your former sinful courses, even while pursuing them? Were they not attended with remorse, trouble, mischief, and stings of conscience? And what bitter fruits do they produce in reflection; as holy Job says, *"Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the sins of my youth!"* Sin is extremely *hurtful* and *dangerous* to ourselves and others. The sinner is like the madman, who casteth abroad fire-brands, arrows, and death, and saith, *"Am I not in sport?"* You would shudder to see a child playing with a razor, or the fire, or standing on the brink of a deep precipice at the sea-side! Yet such is the state of every man in his sins. Such was once our state; and may not the time past suffice to have wrought the will of the flesh, yea the will of the Devil, who was aiming at our destruction? "for the end of those things is death," the direct tendency and due desert of these sinful practices is nothing less than death temporal and eternal. How dreadfully mischievous is the sinner to his neighbour! He cannot be content to perish alone. Like the Devil, he labours to bring others into the same condemnation with himself. He is a soul-murderer. What a melancholy reflection to a considerate mind? Perhaps there are souls now in hell who perished by my means. It was the dread of such a reflection that probably made David wish that a message might be sent to his five brethren, to prevent their coming to the place of torment; for it is likely they had been led into sin by his iniquitous counsel and wicked example; and he knew that if they came there, they would upbraid him as the author of their ruin. Now surely

the time past may suffice to have been so hurtful to ourselves and others.

It is also reasonable to forsake sin, *because it is so highly dishonourable to the blessed God.* Surely God deserves to be loved and obeyed by all his creatures; but sin is an act of robbery; it defrauds God of his just rights, and transfers to Satan the obedience due to him. It is an act of treason and rebellion against the Majesty of heaven. Yea, it is a kind of *atheism*; for in vain we profess "to know God, if in works we deny him;" if we live in sin, we live "without a God in the world."

Once more, a life of sin is directly *contrary to our Christian profession.* Why do we call ourselves *Christians*, if we neither obey nor resemble Christ? Why call we him Master and Lord, if we do not the things which he commands? Were we not baptized unto Christ? And does not our baptism signify "a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness?" a renouncing the world, the flesh, and the devil? To be a Christian indeed, is to be a follower of Christ, to have the same mind in us as was in him, and to walk even as he walked; but what a horrid contradiction there is in such names or characters as these—a drunken Christian—a lying Christian—a Jew Christian—a profane Christian. I remember to have read of Alexander the Great, that he had a soldier in his army of his own name; but understanding that he was a base cowardly fellow, he called him into his presence, and reproaching him with his cowardice, said, "Either change your name, or fight better." And how properly might the great and holy Redeemer say to wicked men, professing to be Christians, Renounce the name of Christian, or live better! How reasonable then is it to forsake sin, seeing it was such a waste of precious time; so useless, so hurtful, to ourselves and others; so dishonourable to God, and so contrary to our holy profession as Christians.

Rather

Rather let us obey the exhortation of St. Paul, Rom. xii. 1. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your *reasonable service*; it is fit and right, as we are the creatures of God, the Author of all our powers, and especially if we are partakers of his grace, and love in Christ Jesus—" for of him, and through, and to him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

IV. Lastly, we are to consider *the usage which a changed person may expect to meet with from a wicked world*: "they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you;" they wonder what is come to you, that you have so suddenly forsaken their company, and their guilty pleasures; they cannot account for such a strange alteration, and they despise you as stiff, unsociable, foolish creatures, or as mad enthusiasts.

Now here observe, my friends, that where such a change as this takes place, it is visible; for if the world did not see it, they could not hate it. And indeed when persons who have lived in open sin become serious and holy, the change cannot be hid. It is said of Barnabas, that "when he came to Antioch, and had seen the grace of God, he was glad;" the grace of God, as a spiritual principle in the heart, cannot be seen by bodily eyes; but the effects of it in a holy life and conversation must and will be seen. Christians, however humble and retired, are like "a city set upon a hill, which cannot be hid;" they are like "a candle that giveth light unto all that are in the house;" and "their light must to shine before men, that they may see their good works, and glorify their Father who is in heaven." Mat. v. 14, 16. Yes, the change we speak of will be observed. Carnal companions will be deserted, places of vain amusement forsaken. No oath or filthy jest, or light expression, will proceed from the mouth; the places where the gospel is preached

will be frequented, the Sabbath-day will be carefully kept holy, and the whole behaviour and appearance will be such as become godliness.

This will excite hatred: "The carnal mind is enmity against God," and every thing godly and God-like. When God permits, persecution will follow; and if this is not public, by the magistrate (which, blessed be God, our laws prevent) yet relations, friends, and neighbours, shew their dislike. "Every one who is godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution," so the Scripture declares, and serious persons will be sure to find it. Nor let them wonder or be offended at this, for from the beginning it was so—"He that was born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the Spirit." And every believer must bear the cross; if not "Abel's cross, yet Isaac's;" if not martyrdom, yet mocking. *They think it strange, and then speak evil;* perhaps they will falsely accuse you, they will say you are hypocrites, and take up a profession of religion to answer some wicked purposes. But be not offended; this is rather "a token for good" on your behalf, while, on theirs, it is an awful evidence of their Christless, dangerous state; for, as it follows in the next verse, *They shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead;* they must answer for all their ungodly deeds and hard speeches; and what will they answer to Jesus, on whom all their reproaches fall, when he shall say, "Why persecute ye me?" Let persecutors consider how they will answer this.

APPLICATION.

We have considered, in the first place, *the walk of a natural man*; and may we not say, Lord, what is man? What a wretched, fallen, wicked creature is man! How is our nature depraved, which inclines us to such a course; and what abundant cause is there for mourning and lamentation on this account. And say, my friends, what sort of walk is *this*? Whole

will do we follow? Is it the will of the flesh? or the will of God? Which of these do you consult? Do you consider in your daily walk, will this action I am going to do, this pleasure I am going to take, please God or not? Can I ask his blessing upon it? Are you not rather led captive by your sinful passions, your sensual inclinations, and the custom of the world? But you plainly see from the text that this way leads to destruction, and you must forsake it or perish.

Learn also that *the commonness of sin affords no excuse for it.* The will of the Gentiles, or the way of the world is the broad way to ruin. Follow not the multitude to do evil. Forsake the foolish and live. The narrow road that leads to heaven has but few travellers: God grant we may be found among their number.

From what has been said, *the necessity of regeneration* evidently appears. Is the heart of man so corrupt? Is he so strongly inclined to the will of the world, and the beastly lusts of the flesh, what then can effect an entire change and alteration, first in the heart, and then in the life? "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spot?" With man this is impossible; but nothing is too hard for the Lamb. The people to whom St. Peter wrote had felt this change, and so have thousands in all ages. For this purpose the Lord has sent his gospel hither. Salvation has come to this house. To you is the word of this salvation sent. The Lord incline your souls to receive it. The Lord open your hearts, as he did Lydia's, to attend to the word. Which of you is willing to be saved; to be saved now; to be saved from sin; to be saved by Jesus? He is able to save to the uttermost; it is his office to freely show his delight to save; and therefore he sends us in his name, to invite you to come to him; to beseech you to be reconciled to God. Come; then, fellow sinners, all things are ready. Come to this great and

loving Saviour, and he will wash you from all your past sins in the fountain of his precious blood, and give you a new heart, a heart to love him, and walk in his holy pleasant ways. O, that we could but persuade you to forsake your sins, and come to Jesus for life. But this is his work. The Lord make you "willing in the day of his power."

Christians! with what holy shame and grief may you review the former part of your lives! May not "the time past suffice to have wrought the will of the Gentiles?" Did you not live long enough in sin? Ah! you will say, Too, too long! O, the vanity of my childhood and youth! O, mis-spent Sabbaths! O, my youthful wantonness, lust, and revellings. I look back upon them with a mixture of shame and indignation. I blush to lift up my face to a holy God. I smite my breast with the publican, and say, God be merciful to me a sinner!

Well, God has been merciful to you. **6 JU 62** Not this a brand plucked out of the fire? O what debtors are we to the free, sovereign, Almighty grace of Jesus. You were dead in trespasses and sins; you hath he quickened, and saved by his grace. "Such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God." 1 Cor. vi. 11.

And now, my friends, what doth the Lord require of us? Have we lost so much time while we were in our sins? O let us be doubly diligent in future. Let us redeem the time, for the days are few and evil. Let us be active for God, for our own souls, and for others. Let us lay ourselves out for usefulness. And instead of running with the wicked, in the ways of sin, let us run with enlarged hearts in the ways of God. Let us exhort one another daily, and so much the more, as the day is approaching. Let us provoke one another to love and to good works. Let us prove our love to Jesus, our great Deliverer, by holy obedience and grateful praises against the

DIVES AND LAZARUS; OR, The Sufficiency of Scripture, for the Purposes of Salvation. Intended as a Check to Infidelity.



S E R M O N

LUKE xvi. 31.

If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

ETERNITY is at hand ! Let us take a view of it—A view set before us by Jesus Christ himself ; by him “ who brought life and immortality to light,” and who best knew how to describe the state of a saint in heaven and a sinner in hell. Our text is the close of a parable, designed to reprove the Pharisees, who were covetous and worldly. Here we have an account of a very wicked man who was rich, and of a very good man who was poor. Death came and ended all the pleasures of the one, and all the pains of the other. The rich man being in hell, desires the poor man may be sent from heaven to convert his brethren on earth ; but he is told in these words, that if they will not mind their Bible, they would mind nothing else. This text, my friends, is chosen on purpose to recommend the Bible to you, **that**

that you may not neglect the only book which, under God, is able to save your souls. *ON : CHOLS 25W 2UTES*
25W We read in the 19th verse, *There was a certain rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day.* It is not a sin to be rich; nor is it a sin for the rich to wear handsome clothes, nor keep good tables: but it is very dangerous to the soul to be rich; because those who have much of the world are tempted to love the world too much, to forget God, and to neglect their souls. A life of ease, pleasure, and honour, is so contrary to a life of faith, repentance, and self-denial, that few rich men are saved. *NO DOUBT*
21 Ver. 20, 21. *And there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, who was laid at his gate, full of sores; and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table; moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores.* Learn from this, that we cannot judge of any man's state before God, by his circumstances in the present world. A wicked man may be very prosperous, and a good man may be in great affliction. Poor Lazarus was helpless indeed; as his name signifies: it is hard to be poor, but harder still to be sick and poor. Lazarus could not work, or he would not have begged. He could not even walk. Somebody was kind enough to bring him to the rich man's gate (for there was no parish-relief in those days) in hope that he would be observed, pitied, and relieved. Poor Lazarus was very modest and humble. A bit of broken meat was all he wanted; but this was denied. The wanton, pampered dogs came and licked his running sores; which shews that he had not a bit of linen to cover them, and keep them from the air; and he was so weak, that he could not keep off the dogs, which seemed to devour him.

What a picture is this of a hard-hearted rich man and a patient beggar! "Dives could not plead that he

he was oppressed with a number of beggars, for Lazarus was alone; nor that he was unknown to him, for he lies at the gate; nor could he say he was idle and might work, for he lay helpless on the ground; nor that he wanted a great deal, for he would have been contented with crumbs; nor that his servants took care of him, for not one of them relieves him? Well! if a man will not pity, God will not love the world.

It came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried.

No doubt, death was welcome to him. He had nothing in this world to set his heart upon: that is an advantage which the poor have above the rich. Poor Lazarus sunk at the last under his heavy burdens. Perhaps his wounds mortified; or he might be starved to death. But blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, they cease from their labours and troubles, and are at rest. Angels, who are ministering spirits to the saints, carried his departed soul to glory; where, like an honoured guest at a feast, he was placed next to the father of the faithful, in whose steps no doubt he had trod, having been a partaker of the same precious faith in Christ.

The rich man also died, and was buried. "Riches profit not in the day of wrath." Money will not bribe death. Dives was bound to the world by a thousand filken cords and golden chains; but death broke them all in a moment, and hurried away his guilty, unprepared soul to the torments of hell. What availed his pompous funeral? The pampered carcase must be the food of worms, while his wretched spirit is confined in the region of despair.

And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and saith Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom; and

he cried and said, *Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.* Ver. 23, 24.

His eyes, once fixed only on earth and earthly things, and which were always turned away from God and his word, are now forced to look upward: and the glimmering of light only serves to discover, at a dreadful distance, the happiness he had lost by his sin, and the bliss of that neglected child of God who once lay and perished at his gate.

Observe. Now he prays. He should have prayed on earth, then he would have been heard. He prays to a saint: he should have prayed to God. He pleads relation to Abraham, calling him Father. Church privileges, or relation to pious people, will not save wicked professors. He asks for mercy; but he asks too late; the door of mercy is for ever shut. He does not expect deliverance, he asks only a moment's partial ease; but this he asks in vain; and how just it is, that he who refused a crumb, should be denied a drop! Observe the answer—ver. 25.

Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivest thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.

Mark this well, you who place your happiness in eating and drinking, and putting on fine clothes. Are these your "good things?" Poor portion indeed! No man can have a greater curse than to be rich and take his pleasure, and enjoy himself continually, if this be his all; if his heart is set on these things, while he lives in sin, neglects his soul, and is alienated from the life of God. The remembrance of such a carnal state, will be the hell of hell. Remorse for such cursed folly is "the worm that never dies," and will add fuel to the fire that shall never be quenched.

Lazarus

Lazarus had all his evil things on earth. He had borne the cross, as every one must, do who follows Christ. Not that he was saved by his poverty and afflictions. There is no merit in these things. Christ alone can save us from our sins; and there are many who are miserable here, who will be miserable also in hell. But Lazarus was a pardoned sinner, and was born of God. Perhaps his afflictions led him to God; and it is happy for poor people when their troubles are sanctified to them, when they learn the evil of sin in the evil of suffering; and having no comfort of a worldly kind, seek comfort in the knowledge of Christ and true religion.

And besides all this, said Abraham, between us and you there is a great gulph fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. ver. 26. Awful separation! Now, saints and sinners meet in the same church; but the distinction will soon be made, and no more intercourse be suffered for ever. The kindest relation, the dearest friend, cannot come to speak one word of comfort to the lost soul; nor can the prisoner of hell ever make his escape, or obtain a release for a single hour. But though the miseries of the damned admit of no relief, they are capable of addition. Should their relations come hither, seduced to sin by their counsel or example, it would add to their torments. This was what Dives dreaded, and therefore he cries to Abraham, ver. 27, 28. *I pray thee, therefore, Father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house, for I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.*

Dives felt the hell which he formerly disbelieved. He had made a jest of hell many a time, and laughed at the fears of religious people, and their pains to avoid it. He had taught his brothers to do the same;

happily discouraged by his example to persist in a sinful course, he had reason to expect each of them would follow him to hell, accuse him as their tempter, and charge their ruin to him. This he knew would increase his sufferings.

Let this be a warning to those who encourage their acquaintance to drunkenness, whoredom, dishonesty, or other sin. Great is the guilt of enticing others to sin, and great will be their torment, when a new sufferer arrives to lay his ruin at their door.

Ver. 29. *Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.* From this answer it is plain that, in the judgment of Christ, there was enough in the Scriptures of the Old Testament to convince men that there is another life after this; a future state of rewards and punishments, whatever some pretend to the contrary. It was the privilege of the Jews to have this testimony; it was sufficient for their conviction; and it was the sin and ruin of those who disregarded. We, my friends, have the same advantage, and a much greater added to it. We have Christ, the Evangelists, and the Apostles; let us hear them.

Dives was not satisfied with this reply, but said, ver. 30. *Nay, Father Abraham, but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.* He carries with him to hell the same light thoughts he had of the Bible when on earth. He presumes to be wiser than God, and to dictate a more effectual mean of conversion than God was pleased to appoint. It is as if he had said, "They don't mind the Bible; its doctrines, commands, and threatenings are grown familiar to them; nay, they make a jest of it all. But an apparition would startle them; if Lazarus, whom they knew to be a good man, were to appear to them, and tell them he is happy in heaven, and now miserable I

am in hell, they would be alarmed, and forsake their

Observe, now, the final answer that Abraham gives—*If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.* This answer well suits the present times; when many wicked men, with a boldness unknown in former days, try to rob us of our Bibles, and cheat us out of eternal life. There is nothing new, my friends, under the sun. The Devil began his works of destruction by persuading Eve to disbelieve the word of God. He has carried on his murderous designs by the same means ever since; and he is making a bold push by his infamous agents at this day, to keep people in their sins, by denying the truth of scripture, and so taking away all motives to true religion, arising from the hope of heaven or the fear of hell.

Consider for a moment *what* the scriptures testify—*Why* we should receive their testimony, and—that if *their* testimony is rejected, no other would be effectual.

The Scriptures certainly testify that the soul of man does not die with the body—that there is a glorious heaven, and a dreadful hell. “It seems that Dives laughed at all this: perhaps you do. Certainly he did not believe it, or why should Lazarus be sent to certify it to his brethren?” Had he believed it, he would have led a very different life: he would not have lived a life of luxury, but a life of self-denial and holiness; nor could he have been so hard-hearted to the poor. Do we believe there is a hell for sinners? We shall fly from the wrath to come. Do we believe there is a heaven for the people of God? We shall strive to enter in. Let our practice, first, prove whether we are believers or infidels. Where there is faith there must be works. All the rest is

The

The scriptures also testify that all mankind are, by the fall of Adam, in a polluted apostate state; guilty before God, and exposed to his dreadful anger. But they also testify that God has so loved the world as to send his Son to be a Saviour—to satisfy divine justice by shedding his blood; and that he has sent his Spirit also to renew by his grace the hearts of men, and make them new creatures: and that whosoever believes in the Son of God, shall not perish in hell, but be saved from sin and brought to glory. Many other things the scriptures teach, but these are the greatest.

Now, my brethren, if we are asked why we believe these things, we are able to give a reason of the hope that is in us. There is no evidence that an unbeliever, like Dives, can now desire, that has not already been given. Dives asked for a miracle. God wrought many miracles by Moses, and more by Jesus Christ; and these are more credible than the apparition of a deceased friend would be. Moses performed many miracles in Egypt and the Wilderness; for the truth of which he appeals to the whole multitude of Israel. Now, is it possible that a million of people could be persuaded that they saw and heard things which they did not see nor hear? Would they not have contradicted him? Could they, for instance, have believed that they had passed through the Red Sea, and that they had subsisted upon manna, in a miraculous manner, for many years, and that their garments had not worn out, if no such things had happened?

But, not to dwell on Moses or the prophets, let us consider the wonderful works of Jesus Christ; who, by the way, confirms the character of Moses; so that the character of Moses and of Christ must stand or fall together.

Jesus Christ appealed to his miracles for the proof of his mission. To the disciples of John, who enquired

quired whether he were the true Messiah or not, he said, "Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them." Mat. xi. 4, 5. All these things are truly miraculous, and such as Divine Power alone is able to perform; but they were perfectly easy to him, and they fully proved his divine authority. These things were not done in a corner; they were done openly, and some of them before thousands of witnesses. His great enemies, the Jews, could not, did not, deny them; they only wickedly ascribed them to the power of the Devil. The Evangelists wrote an account of these miracles in the very country where they were performed, and near the time; so that if they had not been done, thousands would have risen up and contradicted their testimony. The apostles went forth into various countries preaching the gospel of Christ, and confirming its truth by their miraculous works; and surely they cannot be accused of priestcraft. Did not they, as well as the prophets, forfeit the esteem of men, and endure great hardships, even death itself? And was not their whole conduct an evidence of their sincerity?

But our faith does not rest only on the miracles. Prophecy, or predicting events long before they happened, is a proof equally strong. We could give many unanswerable proofs of this kind, but our limits forbid.

The excellent effect of the Christian religion, wherever it is truly received, is another argument in its favour. We daily see, that by the preaching of the gospel sinners are converted to God, that bad men are made good men; they become "new creatures," as the Scripture calls them. So it was at the first; some of the greatest persecutors became Christians.

tiads, and whole nations forsook their idols; and thousands in those nations forsook their detestable practices, and became sober, just, devout, and benevolent. Now, this is a continued miracle; we see it wrought to this day. May God give you, my friends, to know the power of divine truth in your own hearts, and its holy influences upon your temper and conduct, and then you will bear the witness or testimony in yourselves to the truth of Christianity; and this will be more satisfactory than all other evidences put together.

And now say, my friends, if any other, any new testimony is wanting to confirm the truth of Scripture. Dives wished that a person might rise from the dead to convince his brethren; and perhaps there are some people in England who would wish the same. Suppose God should grant their wish. Suppose that in the silent hours of darkness something should appear, something exactly like one of our friends, whom we knew was dead and buried a month before. Suppose he should say, "I am such an one—I am come to tell you that there is a holy God—there is a glorious heaven—there is a dreadful hell—Forsake your sins, and believe in Jesus, or you will perish for ever!" What effect, do you think, such a vision would have? Probably it would frighten you to death; or, if you survived it, and were deeply impressed with it, it is likely that the cares and pleasures of life would wear off the impression in a little time. As to your friends, they would not believe you; they would try to laugh or reason you out of your fancies; they would say it was a dream, or you were mad; and if your heart were not changed by grace, you would yourself begin to doubt, and judge that you were somehow or other imposed upon; so would you remain just what you are, or perhaps become worse.

But not to argue on suppositions, let us resort to matter

matter of fact. The experiment has been tried, and was ineffectual. You remember to have read, in the 11th of St. John, an account of the resurrection of another Lazarus, who lived and died at Bethany, about two miles from Jerusalem. Jesus Christ went to his tomb, and in the presence of many people, cried aloud, "Lazarus, come forth;" the dead heard the voice of the Son of God and lived; he that had been dead four days came forth in his shroud, and went home to his house. This miracle was never denied; it was acknowledged and dreaded by the chief priests and rulers: the neighbours saw him, conversed with him, ate and drank with him; but what effect had it? Some indeed believed; others turned informers, and went and told his enemies, who said; "This man doth many miracles; if we let him alone, all men will believe on him." From that day therefore they resolved to murder him. So that we see, outward evidence alone, however strong, is insufficient of itself to produce faith in the carnal heart.

Take another instance. Our Lord Jesus often declared, that he would rise again on the third day after his death. The appointed hour arrived, and behold there was a great earthquake, the Saviour rose, the keepers, the soldiers, were terrified, they became as dead men. But were they converted? No; they went and informed the priests, who believed their report. But were they converted? No; they hired the soldiers, who saw the resurrection, to tell a lye and say, that while they slept, the disciples of Jesus stole him away. A foolish lie it was, for, if they were asleep, as they pretended, how could they know what happened; and if not asleep, the pretended robbery was impossible; but it proves, that the most sensible, the most awful evidence will not convince or convert men, without the concurrent operation of the

the Holy Spirit. In like manner, we might shew that the most singular and awful providences, such as the death of near relations, and remarkable escapes from death, and the most dreadful views of eternity, and the most solemn vows and resolutions made at such times, prove insufficient to make men truly religious.

Let us now hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Be thankful for your Bible; prize your Bible, read and study your Bible daily, praying to God to give you his Spirit, that you may rightly understand it, and be thereby made wise to salvation. Avoid bad works and bad men as you would poison. Regard not their objections; they can make none that have not been answered a thousand times. Their cavils are mere trifling, like a man who despises such a building as St. Paul's church, on account of a small flaw or two in the surface of a stone. The Scriptures are fulfilling daily before your eyes; and the very objections of infidels are a proof of their truth; for, as our Saviour declared, "Men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil;" and this is the grand source of infidelity, ancient and modern. Sinners are against the Bible, because the Bible is against them.

6 JU 62

Read this parable again when you go home; and learn from it not to envy sinners, however rich and prosperous. Repine not at poverty; but pray it may be sanctified to your soul's benefit. Be content with the evidence God has given you of a future state; be concerned, by faith in Jesus, to avoid the miseries of hell; and to be made meet, by the grace of God, to enjoy, with all the redeemed, the unspeakable joys of the heavenly world, for ever and for ever. God grant this may be the happiness of each of us, for Christ's sake. Amen!